Selections from the World's Devotional Classics

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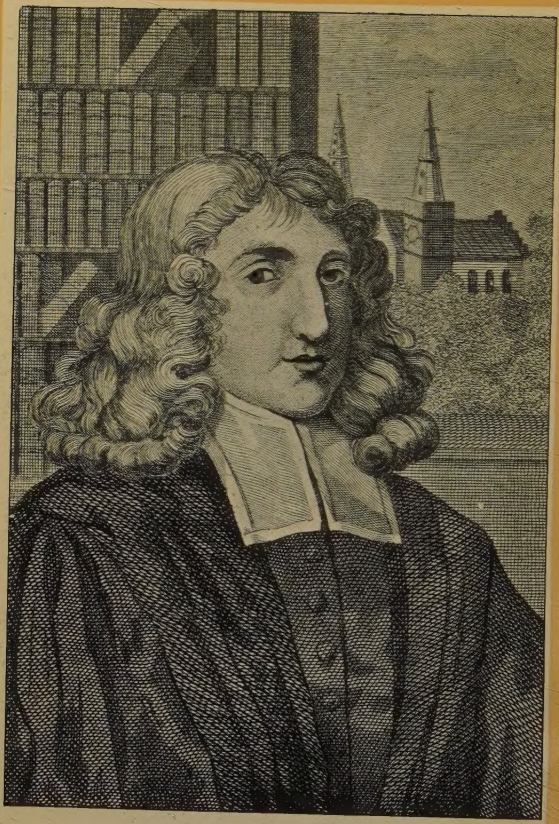
Selections from the

World's Devotional Classics

Volume IX

Herman to Doddridge

Vol. Nine



Henry Scougal

Selections from the World's Devotional Classics

EDITED BY

Robert Scott and George W. Gilmore

Editors of The Homiletic Review

IN TEN VOLUMES

Volume IX

Herman to Doddridge

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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NICHOLAS HERMAN—BROTHER LAURENCE

Carmelite lay brother; born in Lorraine about 1648; died in Paris about 1728. He had been a footman and a soldier; after his conversion at the age of eighteen he was admitted as lay brother in the Carmelite monastery in Paris. There he was assigned to work in the kitchen, where he spent the rest of his life. His example of devotion in even so lowly a station became celebrated, and his secret of contentment is told in the conversations on "The Presence of God," written out possibly by M. Beaufort, vicar to Cardinal de Noailles.

First Conversation

The first time I saw Brother Laurence was upon the 3d of August, 1666. He told me that God had done him a singular favor in his conversion at the age of eighteen.

That in the winter, seeing a tree stript of its leaves, and considering that within a little time the leaves would be renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the providence and power of God, which has never since been effaced from his soul. That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for God that he could not tell whether it had increased during the more than forty years he had lived since.

That he had been footman to M. Fieubert, the treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything.

That he had desired to be received into a monastery, thinking that he would there be made to smart for his awkwardness and the faults he should commit, and so he should sacrifice to God his life, with its pleasures; but that God had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.

That we should establish ourselves in a

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sense of God's presence by continually conversing with him. That it was a shameful thing to quit his conversation to think of trifles and fooleries.

That we should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of God; which would yield us great joy in being devoted to him.

That we ought to quicken—*i.e.*, to enliven—our faith. That it was lamentable we had so little; and that instead of taking faith for the rule of their conduct, men amused themselves with trivial devotions, which changed daily. That the way of faith was the spirit of the Church, and that it was sufficient to bring us to a high degree of perfection.

That we ought to give ourselves up to God, with regard both to things temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling of his will, whether he lead us by suffering or by consolation, for all would be equal to a soul truly resigned. That there needed fidelity in those drynesses or insensibilities and irksomenesses in prayer by which God tries our love to him; that then was the time for us to make good and effectual acts of resignation, whereof one alone would oftentimes very much promote our spiritual advancement.

That as for the miseries and sins he heard of daily in the world, he was so far from

wondering at them; that, on the contrary, he was surprized that they were not more, considering the malice sinners were capable of; that, for his part, he prayed for them; but knowing that God could remedy the mischiefs they did when he pleased, he gave himself no further trouble.

That to arrive at such resignation as God requires, we should watch attentively over all the passions which mingle as well in spiritual things as in those of a grosser nature; that God would give light concerning those passions to those who truly desire to serve him. That if this was my design, *viz.*, sincerely to serve God, I might come to him (Brother Laurence) as often as I pleased, without any fear of being troublesome; but if not, that I ought no more to visit him.

Second Conversation

That he had always been governed by love, without selfish views; and that having resolved to make the love of God the end of all his actions, he had found reasons to be well satisfied with his method. That he was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of God, seeking him only, and nothing else, not even his gifts.

That he had been long troubled in mind

from a certain belief that he should be damned; that all the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary; but that he had thus reasoned with himself about it: I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God, and I have endeavored to act only for him; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love him. That this trouble of mind had lasted four years, during which time he had suffered much; but that at last he had seen that this trouble arose from want of faith, and that since then he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. That he had placed his sins betwixt him and God, as it were, to tell him that he did not deserve his favors, but that God still continued to bestow them in abundance.

That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to him, we must at first apply to him with some diligence; but that after a little care we should find his love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.

That he expected, after the pleasant days God had given him, he should have his turn of pain and suffering; but that he was not uneasy about it, knowing very well that as he

could do nothing of himself, God would not fail to give him the strength to bear it.

That when an occasion of practising some virtue offered, he addrest himself to God, saying, Lord, I can not do this unless thou enablest me; and that then he received strength more than sufficient.

That when he had failed in his duty, he only confest his fault, saying to God, I shall never do otherwise if you leave me to myself; it is you who must hinder my falling, and mend what is amiss. That after this he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

That we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to him frankly and plainly, and imploring his assistance in our affairs, just as they happen. That God never failed to grant it, as he had often experienced.

That he had been lately sent into Burgundy, to buy the provision of wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him, because he had no turn for business, and because he was lame and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. That, however, he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. That he said to God, It was his business he was about, and that he afterward found it very well performed. That he had been sent into Auvergne, the year before, upon the same ac-

count; that he could not tell how the matter passed, but that it proved very well.

So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for his grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy, during fifteen years that he had been employed there.

That he was very well pleased with the post he was now in; but that he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he was always pleasing himself in every condition by doing little things for the love of God.

That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times; that he retired to pray, according to the directions of his superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God.

That as he knew his obligation to love God in all things, and as he endeavored so to do, he had no need of a director to advise him, but that he needed much a confessor to absolve him. That he was very sensible of his faults, but not discouraged by them; that he confest them to God, but did not plead against him to excuse them. When he had so done, he peaceably resumed his usual practise of love and adoration.

That in his trouble of mind he had consulted nobody, but knowing only by the light of faith that God was present, he contented himself with directing all his actions to him, *i.e.*, doing them with a desire to please him, let what would come of it.

That useless thoughts spoil all; that the mischief began there; but that we ought to reject them as soon as we perceived their impertinence to the matter in hand, or our salvation, and return to our communion with God.

That at the beginning he had often passed his time appointed for prayer in rejecting wandering thoughts and falling back into them. That he could never regulate his devotion by certain methods as some do. That, nevertheless, at first he had meditated for some time, but afterward that went off, in a manner he could give no account of.

That all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless, except as they serve to arrive at the union with God by love; that he had well considered this, and found it the shortest way to go straight to him by a continual exercise of love and doing all things for his sake.

That we ought to make a great difference between the acts of the understanding and those of the will; the first were comparatively of little value, and the others, all. That

our only business was to love and delight ourselves in God.

That all possible kinds of mortification, if they were void of the love of God, could not efface a single sin. That we ought, without anxiety, to expect the pardon of our sins from the blood of Jesus Christ, only endeavoring to love him with all our hearts. That God seemed to have granted the greatest favors to the greatest sinners, as more signal monuments of his mercy.

That the greatest pains or pleasures of this world were not to be compared with what he had experienced of both kinds in a spiritual state; so that he was careful for nothing and feared nothing, desiring only one thing of God, *viz.*, that he might not offend him.

That he had no scruples; for, said he, when I fail in my duty, I readily acknowledge it, saying, I am used to do so; I shall never do otherwise if I am left to myself. If I fail not, then I give God thanks, acknowledging that the strength comes from him.

Third Conversation

He told me that the foundation of the spiritual life in him had been a high notion and esteem of God in faith; which when he had once well conceived, he had no other care at

first but faithfully to reject every other thought, that he might perform all his actions for the love of God. That when sometimes he had not thought of God for a good while, he did not disquiet himself for it; but, after having acknowledged his wretchedness to God, he returned to him with so much the greater trust in him as he had found himself wretched through forgetting him.

That the trust we put in God honors him much and draws down great graces.

That it was impossible not only that God should deceive, but also that he should long let a soul suffer which is perfectly resigned to him, and resolved to endure everything for his sake.

That he had so often experienced the ready succors of divine grace upon all occasions, that from the same experience, when he had business to do, he did not think of it beforehand; but when it was time to do it, he found in God, as in a clear mirror, all that was fit for him to do. That of late he had acted thus, without anticipating care; but before the experience above mentioned, he had used it in his affairs.

When outward business diverted him a little from the thought of God, a fresh remembrance coming from God invested his soul, and so inflamed and transported him that it was difficult for him to contain himself.

That he was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion and retirement.

That he expected hereafter some great pain of body or mind; that the worst that could happen to him was to lose that sense of God which he had enjoyed so long; but that the goodness of God assured him he would not forsake him utterly, and that he would give him strength to bear whatever evil he permitted to happen to him; and therefore that he feared nothing, and had no occasion to consult with anybody about his state. That when he had attempted to do it, he had always come away more perplexed; and that as he was conscious of his readiness to lay down his life for the love of God, he had no apprehension of danger. That perfect resignation to God was a sure way to heaven, a way in which we had always sufficient light for our conduct.

That in the beginning of the spiritual life we ought to be faithful in doing our duty and denying ourselves; but after that, unspeakable pleasures followed. That in difficulties we need only have recourse to Jesus Christ, and beg his grace; with that everything became easy.

That many do not advance in the Christian progress because they stick in penances and particular exercises, while they neglect the

love of God, which is the end. That this appeared plainly by their works, and was the reason why we see so little solid virtue.

That there needed neither art nor science for going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but him, or for his sake, and to love him only.

Fourth Conversation

He discoursed with me very frequently, and with great openness of heart, concerning his manner of going to God, whereof some part is related already.

He told me that all consists in one hearty renunciation of everything which we are sensible does not lead to God. That we might accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with him, with freedom and in simplicity. That we need only to recognize God intimately present with us, to address ourselves to him every moment, that we may beg his assistance for knowing his will in things doubtful, and for rightly performing those which we plainly see he requires of us, offering them to him before we do them, and giving him thanks when we have done.

That in this conversation with God we are also employed in praising, adoring, and lov-

ing him incessantly, for his infinite goodness and perfection.

That, without being discouraged on account of our sins, we should pray for his grace with a perfect confidence, as relying upon the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. That God never failed offering us his grace at each action; that he distinctly perceived it, and never failed of it, unless when his thoughts had wandered from a sense of God's presence, or he had forgotten to ask his assistance.

That God always gave us light in our doubts when we had no other design but to please him.

That our sanctification did not depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own. That it was lamentable to see how many people mistook the means for the end, addicting themselves to certain works, which they performed very imperfectly, by reason of their human or selfish regards.

That the most excellent method he had found of going to God was that of doing our common business without any view of pleasing men (Gal. 1:10; Eph. 6:5, 6), and (as far as we are capable) purely for the love of God.

That it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times; that we are as strictly obliged to ad-

here to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer.

That his prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but divine love; and that when the appointed times of prayer were past, he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing him with all his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy; yet hoped that God would give him somewhat to suffer when he should grow stronger.

That we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in God, and make a total surrender of ourselves to him, secure that he would not deceive us.

That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. That we should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often failed in our endeavors, but that at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care, and to our exceeding great delight.

That the whole substance of religion was faith, hope, and charity, by the practise of which we become united to the will of God; that all besides is indifferent, and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end, and

be swallowed up therein, by faith and charity.

That all things are possible to him who believes; that they are less difficult to him who hopes; that they are more easy to him who loves, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practise of these three virtues.

That the end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshipers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity.

That when we enter upon the spiritual life, we should consider and examine to the bottom what we are. And then we should find ourselves worthy of all contempt, and not deserving indeed the name of Christians; subject to all kinds of misery and numberless accidents, which trouble us and cause perpetual vicissitudes in our health, in our humors, in our internal and external dispositions; in fine, persons whom God would humble by many pains and labors, as well within as without. After this we should not wonder that troubles, temptations, oppositions, and contradictions happen to us from men. We ought, on the contrary, to submit ourselves to them, and bear them as long as God pleases, as things highly advantageous to us.

That the greater perfection a soul aspires after, the more dependent it is upon divine grace.

[1] Being questioned by one of his own society (to whom he was obliged to open himself) by what means he had attained such an habitual sense of God, he told him that, since his first coming to the monastery, he had considered God as the end of all his thoughts and desires, as the mark to which they should tend, and in which they should terminate.

That in the beginning of his novitiate he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in thinking of God, so as to convince his mind of, and to impress deeply upon his heart, the divine existence, rather by devout sentiments and submission to the lights of faith than by studied reasonings and elaborate meditations. That by this short and sure method he exercised himself in the knowledge and love of God, resolving to use his utmost endeavor to live in a continual sense of his presence, and, if possible, never to forget him more.

That when he had thus in prayer filled his mind with great sentiments of that infinite Being, he went to his work appointed in the kitchen (for he was cook to the society). There having first considered severally the things his office required, and when and how each thing was to be done, he spent all the in-

[1] The particulars which follow are collected from other accounts of Brother Laurence.

tervals of his time, as well before as after his work, in prayer.

That when he began his business, he said to God, with a filial trust in him: O my God, since thou art with me, and I must now, in obedience to thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech thee to grant me the grace to continue in thy presence; and to this end do thou prosper me with thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections.

As he proceeded in his work he continued his familiar conversation with his Maker, imploring his grace, and offering to him all his actions.

When he had finished he examined himself how he had discharged his duty; if he found well, he returned thanks to God; if otherwise, he asked pardon, and, without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the presence of God as if he had never deviated from it. "Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God as it was at first to accustom myself to it."

As Brother Laurence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it ear-

nestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying, such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but affect the beholders. And it was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquility of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

First Letter

Since you desire so earnestly that I should communicate to you the method by which I arrived at that habitual sense of God's presence, which our Lord, of his mercy, has been pleased to vouchsafe to me, I must tell you that it is with great difficulty that I am prevailed on by your importunities; and now I do it only upon the terms that you show my letter to nobody. If I knew that you would

let it be seen, all the desire that I have for your advancement would not be able to determine me to it. The account I can give you is:

Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and divers practises of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God's. This made me resolve to give the all for the all; so after having given myself wholly to God, that he might take away my sin, I renounced, for the love of him, everything that was not he, and I began to live as if there was none but he and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld him in my heart as my father, as my God, I worshiped him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in his holy presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind had wandered involuntarily. I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything

that was capable of interrupting my thought of God.

Such has been my common practise ever since I entered in religion; and tho I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of God, because we can do nothing without him, and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in his holy presence, and set him always before us, this not only hinders our offending him and doing anything that may displease him, at least wilfully, but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and, if I may so speak, a familiarity with God, wherewith we ask, and that successfully, the graces we stand in need of. In fine, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of God rendered as it were natural to us. Give him thanks, if you please, with me, for his great goodness toward me, which I can never sufficiently admire, for the many favors he has done to so miserable a sinner as I am. May all things praise him. AMEN.

I am, in our Lord,

Yours, etc.

Second Letter

To the Reverend ——

Not finding my maner of life in books, altho I have no difficulty about it, yet, for greater security, I shall be glad to know your thoughts concerning it.

In a conversation some days since with a person of piety, he told me the spiritual life was a life of grace, which begins with servile fear, which is increased by hope of eternal life, and which is consummated by pure love; that each of these states had its different stages, by which one arrives at last at that blessed consummation.

I have not followed all these methods. On the contrary, from I know not what instincts, I found they discouraged me. This was the reason why, at my entrance into religion, I took a resolution to give myself up to God, as the best return I could make for his love, and, for the love of him, to renounce all besides.

For the first year I commonly employed myself during the time set apart for devotion with the thought of death, judgment, heaven, hell, and my sins. Thus I continued some years, applying my mind carefully the rest of the day, and even in the midst of my busi-

ness, to the presence of God, whom I considered always as with me, often as in me.

At length I came insensibly to do the same thing during my set time of prayer, which caused in me great delight and consolation. This practise produced in me so high an esteem for God that faith alone was capable to satisfy me in that point.

Such was my beginning, and yet I must tell you that for the first ten years I suffered much. The apprehension that I was not devoted to God as I wished to be, my past sins always present to my mind, and the great unmerited favors which God did me, were the matter and source of my sufferings. During this time I fell often, and rose again presently. It seemed to me that all creatures, reason, and God himself were against me, and faith alone for me. I was troubled sometimes with thoughts that to believe I had received such favors was an effect of my presumption, which pretended to be at once where others arrive with difficulty; at other times, that it was a wilful delusion, and that there was no salvation for me.

When I thought of nothing but to end my days in these troubles (which did not at all diminish the trust I had in God, and which served only to increase my faith), I found myself changed all at once; and my soul, which till that time was in trouble, felt a profound

inward peace, as if she were in her center and place of rest.

Ever since that time I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love, and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease him. I hope that when I have done what I can, he will do with me what he pleases.

As for what passes in me at present, I can not express it. I have no pain or difficulty about my state, because I have no will but that of God, which I endeavor to accomplish in all things, and to which I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against his order, or from any other motive than purely that of love to him.

I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers but those to which my state obliges me. And I make it my business only to persevere in his holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard to God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God, which often causes me joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, so great that I am forced to use means to moderate them and prevent their appearance to others.

In short, I am assured beyond all doubt that

my soul has been with God above these thirty years. I pass over many things that I may not be tedious to you, yet I think it proper to inform you after what manner I consider myself before God, whom I behold as my King.

I consider myself as the most wretched of men, full of sores and corruption, and who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King. Touched with a sensible regret, I confess to him all my wickedness, I ask his forgiveness, I abandon myself in his hands that he may do what he pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at his table, serves me with his own hands, gives me the key of his treasures; he converses and delights himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as his favorite. It is thus I consider myself from time to time in his holy presence.

My most useful method is this simple attention, and such a general passionate regard to God, to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at the mother's breast; so that, if I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there.

If sometimes my thoughts wander from it by necessity or infirmity, I am presently recalled by inward motions so charming and delicious that I am ashamed to mention them. I desire your Reverence to reflect rather upon my great wretchedness, of which you are fully informed, than upon the great favors which God does me, all unworthy and ungrateful as I am.

As for my set hours of prayer, they are only a continuation of the same exercise. Sometimes I consider myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before God, I desire him to form his perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like himself.

At other times, when I apply myself to prayer, I feel all my spirit and all my soul lift itself up without any care or effort of mine, and it continues as it were suspended and firmly fixt in God, as in its center and place of rest.

I know that some charge this state with inactivity, delusion, and self-love. I confess that it is a holy inactivity, and would be a happy self-love if the soul in that state were capable of it, because, in effect, while she is in this repose, she can not be disturbed by such acts as she was formerly accustomed to, and which

were then her support, but which would now rather hinder than assist her.

Yet I can not bear that this should be called delusion, because the soul which thus enjoys God desires herein nothing but him. If this be delusion in me, it belongs to God to remedy it. Let him do what he pleases with me; I desire only him, and to be wholly devoted to him. You will, however, oblige me in sending me your opinion, to which I always pay a great deference, for I have a singular esteem for your Reverence, and am, in our Lord,

Yours, etc.

Third Letter

We have a God who is infinitely gracious and knows all our wants. I always thought that he would reduce you to extremity. He will come in his own time, and when you least expect it. Hope in him more than ever; thank him with me for the favors he does you, particularly for the fortitude and patience which he gives you in your afflictions. It is a plain mark of the care he takes of you. Comfort yourself, then, with him, and give thanks for all.

I admire also the fortitude and bravery of Mr. ——. God has given him a good disposition and a good will; but there is in him still

a little of the world and a great deal of youth. I hope the affliction which God has sent him will prove a wholesome remedy to him, and make him enter into himself. It is an accident which should engage him to put all his trust in him who accompanies him everywhere. Let him think of him as often as he can, especially in the greatest dangers. A little lifting up of the heart suffices. A little remembrance of God, one act of inward worship, tho upon a march, and a sword in hand, are prayers, which, however short, are nevertheless very acceptable to God; and far from lessening a soldier's courage in occasions of danger, they best serve to fortify it.

Let him then think of God the most he can. Let him accustom himself, by degrees, to this small but holy exercise. No one will notice it, and nothing is easier than to repeat often in the day these little internal adorations. Recommend to him, if you please, that he think of God the most he can, in the manner here directed. It is very fit and most necessary for a soldier, who is daily exposed to the dangers of life. I hope that God will assist him and all the family, to whom I present my service, being theirs and

Yours, etc.

Fourth Letter

I have taken this opportunity to communicate to you the sentiments of one of our society, concerning the admirable effects and continual assistances which he receives from the presence of God. Let you and me both profit by them.

You must know his continual care has been, for about forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease him, and this without any other view than purely for the love of him, and because he deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that divine presence that he receives from it continual succors upon all occasions. For about thirty years his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly.

If sometimes he is a little too much absent from that divine presence, God presently makes himself to be felt in his soul to recall him, which often happens when he is most engaged in his outward business. He answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart toward God, or by a meek and fond regard to him; or

by such words as love forms upon these occasions, as, for instance, My God, here I am all devoted to thee. Lord, make me according to thy heart. And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the fund and center of his soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that God is always in the fund or bottom of his soul that it renders him incapable of doubting it upon any account whatever.

Judge by this what content and satisfaction he enjoys while he continually finds in himself so great a treasure. He is no longer in an anxious search after it, but has it open before him, and may take what he pleases of it.

He complains much of our blindness, and cries often that we are to be pitied who content ourselves with so little. God, saith he, has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take up with a little sensible devotion, which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God and stop the current of his graces. But when he finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, he pours into it his graces and favors plentifully; there they flow like a torrent which, after being forcibly stopt against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage,

spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Yes, we often stop this torrent by the little value we set upon it. But let us stop it no more; let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left. Death follows us close; let us be well prepared for it; for we die but once, and a miscarriage there is irretrievable.

I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses, there is no room for delay; our souls are at stake. I believe you have taken such effectual measures that you will not be surprized. I commend you for it; it is the one thing necessary. We must, nevertheless, always work at it, because not to advance in the spiritual life is to go back. But those who have the gale of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep. If the vessel of our soul is still tossed with winds and storms, let us awake the Lord, who reposes in it, and he will quickly calm the sea.

I have taken the liberty to impart to you these good sentiments, that you may compare them with your own. It will serve again to kindle and inflame them, if by misfortune (which God forbid, for it would be indeed a great misfortune) they should be, tho never

so little, cooled. Let us then both recall our first fervors. Let us profit by the example and the sentiments of this brother, who is little known of the world, but known of God, and extremely carest by him. I will pray for you; do you pray instantly for me, who am, in our Lord, Yours, etc.

Fifth Letter

I received this day two books and a letter from Sister ——, who is preparing to make her profession, and upon that account desires the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I perceive that she reckons much upon them; pray do not disappoint her. Beg of God that she may make her sacrifice in the view of his love alone, and with a firm resolution to be wholly devoted to him. I will send you one of these books, which treat of the presence of God, a subject which, in my opinion, contains the whole spiritual life; and it seems to me that whoever duly practises it will soon become spiritual.

I know that for the right practise of it the heart must be empty of all other things, because God will possess the heart alone; and as he can not possess it alone without emptying it of all besides, so neither can he act there, and do in it what he pleases, unless it be left vacant to him.

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Those only can comprehend it who practise and experience it; yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive. It is not pleasure which we ought to see in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because God would have us.

Were I a preacher, I should, above all other things, preach the practise of the presence of God; and were I a director, I should advise all the world to do it, so necessary do I think it, and so easy, too.

Ah! knew we but the want we have of the grace and assistance of God, we should never lose sight of him—no, not for a moment. Believe me; make immediately a holy and firm resolution nevermore wilfully to forget him, and to spend the rest of your days in his sacred presence, deprived, for the love of him, if he thinks fit, of all consolations.

Set heartily about this work, and if you do it as you ought, be assured that you will soon find the effects of it. I will assist you with my prayers, poor as they are. I recommend myself earnestly to yours and those of your holy society, being theirs, and more particularly

Yours, etc.

Sixth Letter

I have received from Mrs. —— the things which you gave her for me. I wonder that you have not given me your thoughts of the little book I sent to you, and which you must have received. Pray set heartily about the practise of it in your old age; it is better late than never.

I can not imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practise of the presence of God. For my part, I keep myself retired with him in the fund or center of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with him I fear nothing, but the least turning from him is insupportable.

This exercise does not much fatigue the body; it is, however, proper to deprive it sometimes, nay, often, of many little pleasures which are innocent and lawful, for God will not permit that a soul which desires to be devoted entirely to him should take other pleasures than with him: that is more than reasonable.

I do not say that therefore we must put any violent constraint upon ourselves. No, we must serve God in a holy freedom; we must do our business faithfully, without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God mildly, and

with tranquility, as often as we find it wandering from him.

It is, however, necessary to put our whole trust in God, laying aside all other cares, and even some particular forms of devotion, tho very good in themselves, yet such as one often engages in unreasonably, because these devotions are only means to attain to the end. So when by this exercise of the presence of God we are with him who is our end, it is then useless to return to the means; but we may continue with him our commerce of love, persevering in his holy presence, one while by an act of praise, of adoration, or of desire; one while by an act of resignation or thanksgiving; and in all the ways which our spirit can invent.

Be not discouraged by the repugnance which you may find in it from nature; you must do yourself violence. At the first one often thinks it lost time, but you must go on, and resolve to persevere in it to death, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may occur. I recommend myself to the prayers of your holy society, and yours in particular. I am, in our Lord,

Yours, etc.

Seventh Letter

I pity you much. It will be of great importance if you can leave the care of your affairs to ——, and spend the remainder of your life only in worshiping God. He requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of him from time to time; a little adoration; sometimes to pray for his grace, sometimes to offer him your sufferings, and sometimes to return him thanks for the favors he has given you, and still gives you, in the midst of your troubles, and to console yourself with him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to him, sometimes even at your meals, and when you are in company; the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to him. You need not cry very loud; he is nearer to us than we are aware of.

It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church. We may make an oratory of our heart wherein to retire from time to time to converse with him in meekness, humility, and love. Every one is capable of such familiar conversation with God, some more, some less. He knows what we can do. Let us begin, then. Perhaps he expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage. We have but little time to live; you are near sixty-four, and I am almost

eighty. Let us live and die with God. Sufferings will be sweet and pleasant to us while we are with him; and the greatest pleasures will be, without him, a cruel punishment to us. May he be blest for all. AMEN.

Accustom yourself, then, by degrees thus to worship him, to beg his grace, to offer him your heart from time to time in the midst of your business, even every moment, if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules, or particular forms of devotion, but act with a general confidence in God, with love and humility. You may assure —— of my poor prayers, and that I am their servant, and particularly

Yours in our Lord, etc.

Eighth Letter

You tell me nothing new; you are not the only one that is troubled with wandering thoughts. Our mind is extremely roving; but, as the will is mistress of all our faculties, she must recall them, and carry them to God as their last end.

When the mind, for want of being sufficiently reduced by recollection at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us,

even against our wills, to the things of the earth.

I believe one remedy for this is to confess our faults and to humble ourselves before God. I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer, many words and long discourses being often the occasions of wandering. Hold yourself in prayer before God like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord. If it sometimes wander and withdraw itself from him, do not much disquiet yourself for that: trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to recollect it; the will must bring it back in tranquility. If you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you.

One way to recollect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquility, is not to let it wander too far at other times. You should keep it strictly in the presence of God; and being accustomed to think of him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm in the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings.

I have told you already at large, in my former letters, of the advantages we may draw from this practise of the presence of God. Let us set about it seriously, and pray for one another. Yours, etc.

Ninth Letter

The enclosed is an answer to that which I received from —— ; pray deliver it to her. She seems to me full of good will, but she would go faster than grace. One does not become holy all at once. I recommend her to you; we ought to help one another by our advice, and yet more by our good examples. You will oblige me to let me hear of her from time to time, and whether she be very fervent and very obedient.

Let us thus think often that our only business in this life is to please God, and that all besides is but folly and vanity. You and I have lived about forty years in religion (*i.e.*, a monastic life). Have we employed them in loving and serving God, who by his mercy has called us to this state, and for that very end? I am filled with shame and confusion when I reflect, on one hand, upon the great favors which God has done, and incessantly continues to do me; and on the other, upon the ill use I have made of them, and my small advancement in the way of perfection.

Since by his mercy he gives us still a little time, let us begin in earnest; let us repair the lost time; let us return with a full assurance to that Father of mercies, who is always ready to receive us affectionately. Let us renounce,

let us generously renounce, for the love of him, all that is not himself; he deserves infinitely more. Let us think of him perpetually. Let us put all our trust in him. I doubt not but we shall soon find the effects of it in receiving the abundance of his grace, with which we can do all things, and without which we can do nothing but sin.

We can not escape the dangers which abound in life without the actual and continual help of God. Let us, then, pray to him for it continually. How can we pray to him without being with him? How can we be with him but in thinking of him often? And how can we often think of him but by a holy habit which we should form of it? You will tell me that I am always saying the same thing. It is true, for this is the best and easiest method I know; and as I use no other, I advise all the world to do it. We must know before we can love. In order to know God, we must often think of him; and when we come to love him, we shall then also think of him often, for our heart will be with our treasure. This is an argument which well deserves your consideration.

I am,

Yours, etc.

Tenth Letter

I have had a good deal of difficulty to bring myself to write to Mr. ——, and I do it now purely because you and Madame —— desire me. Pray write the directions and send it to him. I am very well pleased with the trust which you have in God; I wish that he may increase it in you more and more. We can not have too much in so good and faithful a Friend, who will never fail us in this world nor in the next.

If Mr. —— makes his advantage of the loss he has had, and puts all his confidence in God, he will soon give him another friend, more powerful and more inclined to serve him. He disposes of hearts as he pleases. Perhaps Mr. —— was too much attached to him he has lost. We ought to love our friends, but without encroaching upon the love due to God, which must be the principal.

Pray remember what I have recommended to you, which is, to think often on God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you; why, then, must God be neglected? Do not, then, forget him, but think on him often, adore him continually, live and die

with him; this is the glorious employment of a Christian. In a word, this is our profession; if we do not know it, we must learn it. I will endeavor to help you with my prayers, and am, in our Lord,

Yours, etc.

Eleventh Letter

I do not pray that you may be delivered from your pains, but I pray God earnestly that he would give you strength and patience to bear them as long as he pleases. Comfort yourself with him who holds you fastened to the cross. He will loose you when he thinks fit. Happy those who suffer with him. Accustom yourself to suffer in that manner, and seek from him the strength to endure as much, and as long, as he shall judge to be necessary for you. The men of the world do not comprehend these truths, nor is it to be wondered at, since they suffer like what they are, and not like Christians. They consider sickness as a pain to nature, and not as a favor from God; and seeing it only in that light, they find nothing in it but grief and distress. But those who consider sickness as coming from the hand of God, as the effect of his mercy, and the means which he employs for their salvation—such

commonly find in it great sweetness and sensible consolation.

I wish you could convince yourself that God is often (in some sense) nearer to us, and more effectually present with us, in sickness than in health. Rely upon no other physican; for, according to my apprehension, he reserves your cure to himself. Put, then, all your trust in him, and you will soon find the effects of it in your recovery, which we often retard by putting greater confidence in physic than in God.

Whatever remedies you make use of, they will succeed only so far as he permits. When pains come from God, he only can cure them. He often sends diseases of the body to cure those of the soul. Comfort yourself with the sovereign Physican both of the soul and body.

Be satisfied with the condition in which God places you; however happy you may think me, I envy you. Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me while I should suffer with my God, and the greatest pleasures would be hell to me if I could relish them without him. All my consolation would be to suffer something for his sake.

I must, in a little time, go to God. What comforts me in this life is that I now see him by faith; and I see him in such a manner as might make me say sometimes, I believe no

more, but I see. I feel what faith teaches us, and in that assurance and that practise of faith I will live and die with him.

Continue, then, always with God; it is the only support and comfort for your affliction. I shall beseech him to be with you. I present my service.

Yours, etc.

Twelfth Letter

If we were well accustomed to the exercise of the presence of God, all bodily diseases would be much alleviated thereby. God often permits that we should suffer a little to purify our souls and oblige us to continue with him.

Take courage; offer him your pains incessantly; pray to him for strength to endure them. Above all, get a habit of entertaining yourself often with God, and forget him the least you can. Adore him in your infirmities, offer yourself to him from time to time, and in the height of your sufferings beseech him humbly and affectionately (as a child his father) to make you conformable to his holy will. I shall endeavor to assist you with my poor prayers.

God has many ways of drawing us to himself. He sometimes hides himself from us; but faith alone, which will not fail us in

time of need, ought to be our support, and the foundation of our confidence, which must be all in God.

I know not how God will dispose of me. I am always happy. All the world suffer; and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them.

I would willingly ask of God a part of your sufferings, but that I know my weakness, which is so great that if he left me one moment to myself I should be the most wretched man alive. And yet I know not how he can leave me alone, because faith gives me as strong a conviction as sense can do that he never forsakes us until we have first forsaken him. Let us fear to leave him. Let us be always with him. Let us live and die in his presence. Do you pray for me as I for you.

I am,

Yours, etc.

Thirteenth Letter

I am in pain to see you suffer so long. What gives me some ease and sweetens the feelings I have for your griefs is that they are proofs of God's love toward you. See them in that view and you will bear them more easily. As your case is, it is my opinion that you should

leave off human remedies, and resign yourself entirely to the providence of God. Perhaps he stays only for that resignation and a perfect trust in him to cure you. Since, notwithstanding all your cares, physic has hitherto proved unsuccessful, and your malady still increases, it will not be tempting God to abandon yourself in his hands and expect all from him.

I told you in my last that he sometimes permits bodily diseases to cure the distempers of the soul. Have courage, then; make a virtue of necessity. Ask of God, not deliverance from your pains, but strength to bear resolutely, for the love of him, all that he should please, and as long as he shall please.

Such prayers, indeed, are a little hard to nature, but most acceptable to God, and sweet to those that love him. Love sweetens pains; and when one loves God, one suffers for his sake with joy and courage. Do you so, I beseech you; comfort yourself with him, who is the only Physician of all our maladies. He is the Father of the afflicted, always ready to help us. He loves us infinitely, more than we imagine. Love him, then, and seek no consolation elsewhere. I hope you will soon receive it. Adieu. I will help you with my prayers, poor as they are, and shall always be, in our Lord, Yours, etc.

Fourteenth Letter

I render thanks to our Lord for having relieved you a little, according to your desire. I have been often near expiring, but I never was so much satisfied as then. Accordingly, I did not pray for any relief, but I prayed for strength to suffer with courage, humility, and love. Ah, how sweet it is to suffer with God! However great the sufferings may be, receive them with love. It is paradise to suffer and be with him; so that if in this life we would enjoy the peace of paradise we must accustom ourselves to a familiar, humble, affectionate conversation with him. We must hinder our spirits' wandering from him upon any occasion. We must make our heart a spiritual temple, wherein to adore him incessantly. We must watch continually over ourselves, that we may not do nor say nor think anything that may displease him. When our minds are thus employed about God, suffering will become full of unction and consolation.

I know that to arrive at this state the beginning is very difficult, for we must act purely in faith. But tho it is difficult, we know also that we can do all things with the grace of God, which he never refuses to them who ask it earnestly. Knock, persevere

in knocking, and I answer for it that he will open to you in his due time, and grant you all at once what he has deferred during many years. Adieu. Pray to him for me, as I pray to him for you. I hope to see him quickly.

I am,
Yours, etc.

Fifteenth Letter

God knoweth best what is needful for us, and all that he does is for our good. If we knew how much he loves us, we should always be ready to receive equally and with indifference from his hand the sweet and the bitter. All would please that came from him. The sorest afflictions never appear intolerable, except when we see them in the wrong light. When we see them as dispensed by the hand of God, when we know that it is our loving Father who abases and distresses us, our sufferings will lose their bitterness and become even matter of consolation.

Let all our employment be to know God; the more one knows him, the more one desires to know him. And as knowledge is commonly the measure of love, the deeper and more extensive our knowledge shall be, the greater will be our love; and if our love of God were

great, we should love him equally in pains and pleasures.

Let us not content ourselves with loving God for the mere sensible favors, how elevated soever, which he has done or may do us. Such favors, tho never so great, can not bring us so near to him as faith does in one simple act. Let us seek him often by faith. He is within us; seek him not elsewhere. If we do love him alone, are we not rude, and do we not deserve blame, if we busy ourselves about trifles which do not please and perhaps offend him? It is to be feared these trifles will one day cost us dear.

Let us begin to be devoted to him in good earnest. Let us cast everything besides out of our hearts. He would possess them alone. Beg this favor of him. If we do what we can on our parts, we shall soon see that change wrought in us which we aspire after. I can not thank him sufficiently for the relaxation he has vouchsafed you. I hope from his mercy the favor to see him within a few days.[2] Let us pray for one another.

I am, in our Lord,
Yours, etc.

[2] He took to his bed two days after, and died within the week.

A Prayer of S. Scheretz

O God, behold my grief and care. Fain would I serve thee with a glad and cheerful countenance, but I can not do it. However much I fight and struggle against my sadness, I am too weak for this sore conflict. Help me in my weakness. O thou mighty God! and give me thy Holy Spirit to refresh and comfort me in my sorrow. Amid all my fears and griefs I yet know that I am thine in life and death, and that nothing can really part me from thee; neither things present, nor things to come, neither trial, nor fear, nor pain. And therefore, O Lord, I will still trust in thy grace. Thou wilt not send me away unheard. Sooner or later thou wilt lift this burden from my heart, and put a new song in my lips; and I will praise thy goodness, and thank and serve thee here and forever more. AMEN.

SELECTIONS FROM

The Life of God In the Soul of Man; or, The Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion

BY

HENRY SCOUGAL, M.A.

HENRY SCOUGAL

Author of "The Life of God in the Soul of Man," one "of the few productions of the Scottish Church which have attained the rank of religious classics." Henry Scougal, son of Patrick Scougal, bishop of Aberdeen, was born at Leuchars (probably), Fifeshire, Scotland, in June 1650, and died of consumption at Aberdeen June 13, 1678. He was a distinguished student, and, after a precedent set in the case of George Gordon, first earl of Aberdeen, being "thought worthy to be a master where he had lately been a scholar," he was immediately promoted to be "regent" or professor. The discipline of his class seems to have suffered, but Scougal has the credit of being probably the first professor in Scotland to teach the Baconian philosophy. Ordained in 1672, Scougal was appointed minister of the parish of Auchterless, Aberdeenshire, and as such held the position of precentor in the cathedral of Aberdeen. In his country cure he showed no less independence than in his chair at Aberdeen. In a year's time he was recalled from his pastoral duties to Aberdeen, having been elected by the bishop and synod professor of divinity at King's College. The more important of his works, besides that named above, are his "Sermons" (1751), "Reflections and Meditations, and Essays, Moral and Divine" (1740).

The Occasion of This Discourse

My dear Friend:

This designation doth give you a title to all the endeavors whereby I can serve your interests; and your pious inclinations do so happily conspire with my duty, that I shall not need to step out of my road to gratify you; but I may at once perform an office of friendship, and discharge an exercise of my function, since the advancing of virtue and holiness (which I hope you make your greatest study) is the peculiar business of my employment. This, therefore, is the most proper instance wherein I can vent my affection, and express my gratitude toward you, and I shall not any longer delay the performance of the promise I made you to this purpose: for tho I know you are provided with better helps of this nature than any I can offer you, nor are you like to meet with anything here which you knew not before; yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honor with your friendship, and which is more particularly designed for your use, will be kindly accepted by you; and God's providence perhaps may so direct my thoughts, that something or other may prove useful to you. Nor shall I doubt your pardon if, for molding my discourse into the better frame,

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I lay a low foundation, beginning with the nature and properties of religion, and all along give such way to my thoughts, in the prosecution of the subject, as may bring me to say many things which were not necessary, did I only consider to whom I am writing.

Mistakes about Religion

I can not speak of religion but I must lament that, among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means; some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is that they are of this or the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties and a model of performances; if they live peaceably with their neighbors, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again put all religion in the affections, in rapturous hearts, and ecstatic devotion; and all they aim at is to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure,

and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Savior, till they persuade themselves that they are mightily in love with him, and from thence assume a great confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of Christian graces. Thus are these things which have any resemblance of piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of religion: nay, sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the heathens were wont to worship their gods; there are but too many Christians who would consecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections, whose rugged humor, and sullen pride, must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy toward their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

What Religion is

But certainly religion is quite another thing, and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations

of it. They know by experience that true religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed within us. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully exprest, than by calling it a divine life: and under these terms I shall discourse of it, showing, first, how it is called a life, and then how it is termed divine.

Its Permanency and Stability

I choose to express it by the name of life; first, because of its permanency and stability. Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the mind, not tho it should rise to the height of a rapture, and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls, which may push them forward some steps with a great deal of seeming haste: but anon they flag and give over; they were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled; they did shoot forth fresh and high, but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulsive motions of bodies newly be-

headed, caused by the agitations of the animal spirits, after the soul is departed, which however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance; whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in that same strength and vigor, but many times suffers sad decays; and holy men find greater difficulty in resisting temptations, and less alacrity in the performance of their duties: yet it is not quite extinguished; nor are they abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections, which sway and overrule the rest of the world.

Its Freedom and Unconstrainedness

Again, religion may be designed by the name of life; because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle; and those who have made progress in it, are not acted only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompt-

ing him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience; but those religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul. He prays, and gives thanks, and repents, not only because these things are commanded, but rather because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life; his charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him; his love makes him willing to give; and tho there were no outward obligation, his heart would devise liberal things: injustice and intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to his temper and constitution, as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest. So that I may well say with St. John (John 3:9): "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he can not sin, because he is born of God." Tho holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it; yet it is not so much the sanction of the law, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, which do prevail with them; they account it excellent and desirable in itself, and that in keeping

of it there is great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are acted makes them become a law unto themselves.

Quis legem det amantibus?
Major est amor lex ipse sibi.

"Who shall prescribe a law to those that love?
Love's a more powerful law which doth them move."

In a word, what our blessed Savior said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers (John 4:34), that it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will: and as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, tho we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy and weakness, when it is often so lanquid that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward, but when he is pushed by his hopes, or his fears, by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy, by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. Now if

such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dulness, and is desirous to perform his duties with more spirit and vigor; these are the first motions of the divine life, which, tho it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire unto it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward: it is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully toward the husband whom she doth not love, out of some sense of virtue or honor. Hence also this religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to men's carnal inclinations, and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is absolutely required; it is a law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it stints them to; nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave themselves

the greatest liberty: whereas the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

Religion a Divine Principle

By this time I hope it doth appear, that religion is with a great deal of reason termed a life, or vital principle, and that it is very necessary to distinguish betwixt it and that obedience which is constrained, and depends upon external causes. I come next to give an account why I designed it by the name of divine life; and so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endowed with it, may be said to have God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them.

What the Natural Life Is

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that divine life wherein true religion doth consist, it will perhaps be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension toward those things which are pleasing and acceptable to nature; or self-love issuing forth and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life, I reckon to be sense, taking it largely, as it is opposed unto faith, and importeth our perception and sensation of those things that are either grateful or troublesome to us. Now these animal affections, considered in themselves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vicious or blameable; nay, they are instances of the wisdom of the Creator, furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law unto the brute beasts, whereby they are directed toward the ends for which they were made: but man being made for higher purposes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is so far trans-

ported by the inclinations of this lower life as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and destroyed, but only to be moderated and overruled by a superior and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and a wicked man, is, that in the one divine life bears sway; in the other the animal life doth prevail.

The Different Tendencies of the Natural Life

But it is strange to observe unto what different courses this natural principle will sometimes carry those who are wholly guided by it, according to the divers circumstances that concur with it to determine them; and then not considering this doth frequently occasion very dangerous mistakes, making men think well of themselves by reason of that seeming difference which is betwixt them and others, whereas perhaps their actions do all the while flow from one and the same original. If we consider the natural temper and constitution of men's souls, we shall find some to be airy, frolicksome and light, which makes their behavior extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally serious and se-

vere, and their whole carriage composed into such gravity as gains them a great deal of reverence and esteem. Some are of a humorous, rugged and morose temper, and can neither be pleased themselves, nor endure that others should be so. But all are not born with such sour and unhappy dispositions; for some persons have a certain sweetness and benignity rooted in their natures, and they find the greatest pleasure in the endearments of society, and the mutual complacency of friends, and covet nothing more than to have everybody obliged to them: and it is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderness, to supply the defect of true charity in the one world, and to incline men to do something for one another's welfare. Again, in regard of education, some have never been taught to follow any other rules than those of pleasure or advantage; but others are so inured to observe the strictest rules of decency and honor, and some instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accustomed to look upon as base and unworthy.

In fine, it is no small difference in the deportment of mere natural men, that doth arise from the strength or weakness of their wit or judgment, and from their care or negligence in using them. Intemperance and lust,

injustice and oppression, and all those other impieties which abound in the world, and render it so miserable, are the issues of self-love, the effect of the animal life, when it is neither overpowered by religion, nor governed by natural reason: but if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times disdain the grosser sort of vices, and spring up into fair imitations of virtue and goodness. If a man have but so much reason as to consider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate lust do bring unto his health, his fortune and his reputation, self-love may suffice to restrain him; and one may observe the rules of moral justice, in dealing with others, as the best way to secure his own interest, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all: for this natural principle, by the help of reason, may take a higher flight, and come nigher the instances of piety and religion: it may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths; for why should not these, as well as other speculations, be pleasant and grateful to curious and inquisitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as they have espoused, and be very desirous that others should submit unto their judgment, and approve of the choice of religion which they themselves have

made: it may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleasant whatever be the subject: nay, some it may dispose to no small height of sensible devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of heaven, may make even a carnal heart in love with it; the metaphors and similitudes made use of in Scripture, of crowns and scepters, and rivers of pleasure, etc., will easily affect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, tho he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are described and shadowed forth by them; and when such a person comes to believe that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderness and affection toward so great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily enamoured with him, and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus; and what hand the natural constitution may have in the rapturous devotions of some melancholy persons, hath been excellency discovered of late by several learned and judicious pens.

To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleasant, or himself eminent and conspicuous in the world; but this natural principle, assisted by wit and reason, may prompt him to it; and tho I do not condemn

these things in themselves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and consider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and also that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

Wherein the Divine Life Doth Consist

It is now time to return to the consideration of that divine life whereof I was discoursing before, that life which is hid with Christ in God; and therefore hath no glorious show or appearance in the world, and to the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion. As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension toward those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in an universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blameable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are love to God, charity to man, purity and humility: for (as an excellent person hath well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound, yet do they

carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. Faith hath the same place in the divine life, which sense hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things: it extends itself unto all divine truths; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcileableness to sinners through a mediator; and therefore receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed faith in Jesus Christ.

The love of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Tho this affection may have its first rise from the favors and mercies of God toward ourselves, yet doth it, in its growth and progress, transcend such particular considerations, and ground itself on his infinite goodness, manifested in all the works of creation and providence. A soul, thus possest with divine love, must needs be enlarged toward all mankind, in a sincere and unbounded affection; because of the relation

they have to God, being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them; and this is that charity I named as the second branch of religion, and under which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbor, are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world, will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one; and so far from wronging or injuring any person, that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

By purity I understand a due abstractedness from the body, and mastery over the inferior appetites; or such a temper and disposition of mind as makes a man despise and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy, which are sinful in themselves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intellectual pleasures; which doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty: so that not only chastity and temperance, but also Christian courage and magnanimity, may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep sense of our own meanness, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will

of God, and great deadness toward the glory of the world, and applause of men.

These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of; the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul; and he who hath attained them needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him, written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favor to him; and those beginnings of happiness, which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected and continued to all eternity; and it is not without reason that one said: "I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name was enrolled in the book of life."

Religion Better Understood by Actions than Words

When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently exprest; a lan-

guage and words can not reach them; nor can they be truly understood but by those souls that are enkindled within, and awakened unto the sense and relish of spiritual things: "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The power and life of religion may be better exprest in actions than in words; because actions are more lively things, and do better represent the inward principle whence they proceed: and therefore we may take the best measure of those gracious endowments from the deportment of those in whom they reside; especially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our blessed Savior, a main part of whose business in this world was to teach, by his practise, what he did require of others, and to make his own conversation an exact resemblance of those unparalleled rules which he prescribed: so that if ever true goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was then, when his presence did beautify and illustrate this lower world.

Divine Love Exemplified In Our Savior

That sincere and devout affection wherewith his blessed soul did constantly burn toward his heavenly Father, did express itself in an entire resignation to his will; it was his

very "meat, to do the will, and finish the work of him that sent him."

His Diligence In Doing God's Will

This was the exercise of his childhood, and the constant employment of his riper age. He spared no travel or pains while he was about his Father's business, but took such infinite content and satisfaction in the performance of it, that when, being faint and weary with his journey, he rested himself on Jacob's well and entreated water of the Samaritan woman, the success of his conference with her, and the accession that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with such delight, as seemed to have rebounded to his very body, refreshing his spirits, and making him forget the thirst whereof he complained before, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy.

His Patience In Bearing It

Nor was he less patient and submissive in suffering the will of God, than diligent in the doing of it: he endured the sharpest afflictions, and extremest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or discontented word: for tho he was far from a

stupid insensibility, or a fantastic or stoical obstinancy, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his soul (as his "bloody sweat," and the "sore amazement and sorrow" which he profest, do abundantly declare), yet did he entirely submit to that severe dispensation of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

And he prayed to God, that "if it were possible" (or, as one of the Evangelists hath it, "if he were willing"), "that cup might be removed"; yet he gently added, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Of what strange importance are the expressions (John 12:27) where he first acknowledged the anguish of his spirit: "Now is my soul troubled" (which would seem to produce a kind of demur), "and what shall I say?" and then he goes on to deprecate his sufferings, "Father, save me from this hour"; which he had no sooner uttered, but he doth, as it were, on second thought, recall it in these words, "But for this cause came I into the world"; and concludes, "Father, glorify thy name." Now we must not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakness, in the blessed Jesus; he knew all along what he was to suffer, and did most resolutely undergo it, but it shows us the inconceivable weight and pressure that he was

to bear, which being so afflicting, and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terror; yet considering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content, but desirous to suffer it.

His Constant Devotion

Another instance of his love to God, was, his delight in conversing with him by prayer, which made him frequently retire from the world, and with the greatest devotion and pleasure spend whole nights in the heavenly exercise, tho he had no sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for; which, alas! are almost the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions. Nay, we may say his whole life was a kind of prayer; a constant course of communion with God: if the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive; nor was ever the blessed Jesus surprized with that dulness, or trepidity of spirit, which we must many times wrestle with before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

His Charity to Men

In the second place I should speak of his love and charity toward all men; but he who would express it, must transcribe the history of the gospel, and comment upon it; for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other. All his miraculous works were instances of his goodness as well as his power; and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred, or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried toward the beloved disciple; but every one was his "friend" who obeyed "his holy commands" (John 15:14), and "whosoever did the will of his Father," the same was to him as "his brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35).

Never was any unwelcome to him who came with an honest intention, nor did he deny any request which tended to the good of those which asked it: so that what was spoken of that Roman Emperor, whom for his goodness they called the "darling of mankind," was really performed by him, that never any de-

parted from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth (Mark 10), who was sorry to hear that the kingdom of heaven stood at so high a rate, and that he could not save his soul and his money too. And certainly it troubled our Savior, to see, that when a price was in his hand to get wisdom, yet he had no heart to it: the ingenuity that appeared in his first address, had already procured some kindness for him; for it is said, "and Jesus beholding him, loved him"; but must he, for his sake, cut out a new way to heaven, and alter the nature of things, which make it impossible that a covetous man should be happy?

And what shall I speak of his meekness, who could encounter the monstrous ingratitude and dissimulation of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" What further evidence could we desire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life even for his most bitter enemies; and mingling his prayers with his blood, besought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life to those very persons who procured it.

His Purity

The third branch of the divine life is purity, which, as I said, consists in a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, in a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in doing our duty. Now surely, if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus, who seldom tasted them when they came in his way; but never stept out of his road to seek them. Tho he allowed others the comforts of wedlock; and honored marriage with his presence; yet he chose the severity of a virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed: and tho at the same time he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness; so gracious and divine was the temper of his soul, in allowing to others such lawful gratifications as himself thought good to abstain from, and supplying not only their more extreme and pressing necessities, but also their smaller and less considerable wants. We many times hear of our Savior's sighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laughed, and but once that he rejoiced in spirit: so that through his whole life, he did exactly answer that character given of him by the

prophet of old, that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Nor were the troubles and disaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice; for never did there any appear, on the stage of the world, with greater advantages to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who could bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples' net, and, at another time, receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily have made himself the richest person in the world: nay, without any money, he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have jostled Cæsar out of his throne; having oftener than once fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes; but, to show how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world, he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition "that tho the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he who was Lord and Heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head": he did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance or converse of great ones; but being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen, and such other poor people for his companions, and lived at such a rate, as suited with the meanness of that condition.

His Humility

And thus I am brought unawares to speak of his humility, the last branch of the divine life; wherein he was a most eminent pattern to us that we might "learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart." I shall not now speak of that infinite condescension of the eternal Son of God, in taking our nature upon him; but only reflect on our Savior's lowly and humble deportment while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections which may justly humble the best of men; but he was so entirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes; I mean, so far as he was a creature. He considered those eminent perfections, which shined in his blessed soul, not as his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but, with the profoundest humility, renounced all pretenses to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of "Good Master," when addrest to his human nature by one who it seems was ignorant of his divinity: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but God only": as if he had said, the goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not

worthy to be named or taken notice of; it is God alone who is originally and essentially good. He never made use of his miraculous power for vanity or ostentation. He would not gratify the curiosity of the Jews with a sign from heaven, some prodigious appearance in the air; nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame: but when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times enjoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honor of all to his Father, telling them that of himself he was able to do nothing. I can not insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment toward men; his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a king; his subjection not only to his blessed mother, but to her husband, during his younger years, and his submission to all the indignities and affronts which his rude and malicious enemies did put upon him: the history of his holy life, recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these; and indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of hu-

mility, and all the other parts of religion which I have been endeavoring to describe.

But now, that I may lessen your trouble of reading a long letter, by making some pauses in it; let me here subjoin a prayer, that might be proper, when one, who had formerly entertained some false notions of religion, begins to discover what it is.

A Prayer

Infinite and eternal Majesty! Author and Fountain of being and blessedness! How little do we poor sinful creatures know of thee, or the way to serve and please thee! We talk of religion, and pretend unto it; but alas! how few are there that know and consider what it means! how easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, and issues of self-love, for those divine graces which alone can render us acceptable in thy sight! it may justly grieve me to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows and false images of piety and religion; yet I can not but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased, in some measure, to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of, and what

a divine temper of spirit doth shine in those whom thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto thee. Blessed be thine infinite mercy, who sentest thine own Son to dwell among men, and instruct them by his example as well as his laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. O! that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those excellent graces that shined so eminently in him; and let me never cease my endeavors, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul and Christ be formed within me.

The Excellency and Advantage of Religion

And now, my dear friend, having discovered the nature of true religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it, that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution of those methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity. But, alas! what words shall we find to express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures which can never be rightly understood, but by these holy souls who feel them? "A stranger intermeddleth

not with their joy." Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the soul: its faculties had formely been enfeebled and disordered, so that they could not exercise their natural functions; it had wearied itself with endless tossings and rollings, and was never able to find any rest: now that distemper being removed, it feels itself well; there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a sprightly vigor possesseth every part. The understanding can discern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it. The affections are not tied to the motions of sense, and the influence of external objects; but they are stirred by more divine impressions, are touched by a sense of invisible things.

The Excellency of Divine Love

Let us descend, if you please, into a nearer and more particular view of religion, in those several branches of it which were named before: let us consider that love and affection wherewith holy souls are united to God, that we may see what excellency and felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent passion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a

soul is to be measured by the object of its love: he who loveth mean and sordid things, doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit into a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of these do frequently present themselves unto the mind, and, by a secret force and energy, insinuate into the very constitution of the soul, and mold and fashion it unto their own likeness. Hence we may see how easily lovers or friends do slide into the imitation of the persons whom they affect; and whom, even before they are aware, they begin to resemble not only in the more considerable instances of their deportment, but also in their voice and gesture, and that which we call their mien and air; and certainly we should as well transcribe the virtues and inward beauties of the soul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But now, as all the creatures we converse with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be sullied and corrupted, by placing our affection on them: passion doth easily blind our eyes, so that we first approve, then imitate the things that are blameable in them. The true way to improve and ennoble our souls is, by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impres-

sion of them on ourselves, and "beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory." He who, with a generous and holy ambition, hath raised his eyes toward that uncreated beauty and goodness, and fixt his affection there, is quite of another spirit, of a more excellent and heroic temper than the rest of the world, and can not but infinitely disdain all mean and unworthy things; will not entertain any low or base thoughts, which might disparage his high and noble pretensions. Love is the greatest and most excellent thing we are masters of; and therefore it is folly and baseness to bestow it unworthily: it is, indeed, the only thing we can call our own; other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can ravish our love: if any thing else be counted ours, by giving our love, we give all, so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments: it is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom, by love, we have given ourselves; nay, since it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not to be measured by the event but by the desire, he who loveth, may, in some sense, be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things else which may make the beloved per-

son happy; since he doth heartily wish them, and would really give them if they were in his power: in which sense it is that one makes bold to say that divine love doth, in a manner, give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his nature: but tho this may seem too strained an expression, certainly love is the worthiest present we can offer unto God, and it is extremely debased, when we bestow it another way.

When this affection is misplaced, it doth often vent itself in such expressions as point at its genuine and proper object, and insinuate where it ought to be placed. The flattering and blasphemous terms of adoration, wherein men do sometimes express their passion, are the language of that affection which was made and designed for God; as he who is accustomed to speak to some great person, doth perhaps, unawares, accost another with those titles he was wont to give him: but certainly that passion which accounteth its object a deity, ought to be bestowed on him who really is so: those unlimited submissions, which would debase the soul if directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it when placed here: those chains and cords of love are infinitely more glorious than liberty itself; this slavery is more noble than all the empires in the world.

The Advantages of Divine Love

Again, as divine love doth advance and elevate the soul; so it is that alone which can make it happy: the highest and most ravishing pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights that human nature is capable of, are those which arise from the endearments of a well-placed and successful affection. That which embitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troublesome and hurtful passion, is the placing it on those who have not worth enough to deserve it, or affection and gratitude to requite it, or whose absence may deprive us of the pleasure of their converse, or their miseries occasion our trouble. To all these evils are they exposed, whose chief and supreme affection is placed on creatures like themselves; but the love of God delivers us from them all.

The Worth of the Object

First, I say love must needs be miserable, and full of trouble and disquietude, when there is not worth and excellency enough in the object to answer the vastness of its capacity. So eager and violent a passion can not but fret and torment the spirit, when it finds not wherewith to satisfy its cravings: And, indeed, so large and unbounded is its nature,

that it must be extremely pinched and straightened, when confined to any creature; nothing below an infinite good can afford it room to stretch itself and exert its vigor and activity. What is a little skin-deep beauty, or some small degrees of goodness, to match or satisfy a passion which was made for God, designed to embrace an infinite good? No wonder lovers do so hardly suffer any rival, and do not desire others should approve their passion by imitating it: they know the scantiness and narrowness of the good which they love, that it can not suffice two, being in effect too little for one. Hence love, which "is strong as death," occasioneth "jealousy which is cruel as the grave"; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most violent flame.

But divine love hath no mixture of this gall. When once the soul is fixt on that supreme and all-sufficient good, it finds so much perfection and goodness, as doth not only answer and satisfy its affection, but master and overpower it too: it finds all its love to be too faint and languid for such a noble object, and is only sorry that it can command no more. It wishes for the flames of a seraph, and longs for the time when it shall be wholly melted and dissolved into love; and because it can do so little itself, it desires the assistance of the whole creation, that angels and

men would concur with it in the admiration and love of those infinite perfections.

The Certainty to Be Beloved Again

Again, love is accompanied with trouble, when it misseth a suitable return of affection. Love is the most valuable thing we can bestow, and by giving it we do, in effect, give all that we have; and therefore it must needs be afflicting to find so great a gift despised, that the present which one hath made of his whole heart can not prevail to obtain any return. Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interests. not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves. Thus he is quite undone, unless he meets with reciprocal affection; he neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him: but if he be beloved, he is revived, as it were, and liveth in the soul and care of the person whom he loves; and now he begins to mind his own concernments, not so much because they are his, as because the beloved is pleased to own an interest in them; he becomes dear unto himself, because he is so unto the other.

But why should I enlarge in so known a matter? Nothing can be more clear, than that the happiness of love depends on the return it meets with; and herein the divine lover hath unspeakably the advantage, having placed his affection on him whose nature is love, whose goodness is as infinite as his being, whose mercy prevented us when we were his enemies, therefore can not choose but embrace us when we are become his friends. It is utterly impossible that God should deny his love to a soul wholly devoted to him, and which desires nothing so much as to serve and please him; he can not disdain his own image, nor the heart in which it is engraven: love is all the tribute which we can pay him, and it is the sacrifice which he will not despise.

The Presence of the Beloved Person

Another thing which disturbs the pleasure of love, and renders it a miserable and unquiet passion, is absence and separation from those we love. It is not without a sensible affliction that friends do part, tho for some little time it is sad to be deprived of that society which is so delightful; our life becomes tedious, being spent in an impatient expectation of the happy hour wherein we may meet again: but if death have made the separation,

as some time or other it must, this occasions a grief scarce to be paralleled by all the misfortunes of human life, and wherein we may pay dear enough for the comforts of our friendship. But, O how happy are those who have placed their love on him who can never be absent from them! They need but open their eyes, and they shall everywhere behold the traces of his presence and glory, and converse with him whom their soul loveth; and this makes the darkest prison, or the wildest desert, not only supportable, but delightful to them.

The Divine Love Makes Us Partake of an Infinite Happiness

In fine, a lover is miserable, if the person whom he loveth be so; they who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one another's happiness and misery: and this makes love a troublesome passion, when placed on earth. The most fortunate person hath grief enough to mar the tranquility of his friend; and it is hard to hold it out, when we are attacked on all hands, and suffer not only in our own person, but in another's. But if God were the object of our love, we should share in an infinite happiness without any mixture, or possibility of diminu-

tion; we should rejoice to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleasure from all the praises wherewith men and angels do extol him. It should delight us, beyond all expression, to consider, that the beloved of our souls is infinitely happy in himself, and that all his enemies can not shake or unsettle his throne; that our God is in the heavens, and doeth whatsoever he pleaseth.

Behold, on what sure foundations his happiness is built, whose soul is possest with divine love, whose will is transformed into the will of God, and whose greatest desire is, that his Maker should be pleased! O the peace, the rest, the satisfaction that attendeth such a temper of mind!

He that Loveth God Finds Sweetness In Every Dispensation

What an infinite pleasure must it needs be, thus, as it were, to lose ourselves in him, and, being swallowed up in the overcoming sense of his goodness, to offer ourselves a living sacrifice, always ascending unto him in flames of love. Never doth a soul know what a solid joy and substantial pleasure is, till once, being weary of itself, it renounces all property, gives itself up unto the author of its being, and feels itself become an hallowed and devot-

ed thing, and can say, from an inward sense and feeling, "My beloved is mine" (I account all his interest mine own), "and I am his": I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for myself, but that I may serve him. A person, molded into this temper, would find pleasure in all the dispensations of providence: temporal enjoyments would have another relish, when he should taste the divine goodness in them, and consider them as tokens of love sent by his dearest Lord and Maker: and chastisements, tho they be not joyous, but grievous, would hereby lose their sting; the rod as well as the staff would comfort him: he would snatch a kiss from the hand that was smiting him, and gather sweetness from that severity; nay, he would rejoice, that tho God did not the will of such a worthless and foolish creature as himself, yet he did his own will, and accomplished his own designs, which are infinitely more holy and wise.

The Duties of Religion Are Delightful to Him

The exercises of religion, which to others are insipid and tedious, do yield the highest pleasure and delight to souls possest with divine love. They rejoice when they are called "to go up to the house of the Lord,"

that they may "see his power and his glory, as they have formerly seen it in the sanctuary" (Ps. 63:2). They never think themselves so happy, as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noise and hurry of affairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions (those troublesome guests within), they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain fellowship and communion with him: they delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favors, and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburden their hearts in his bosom. Repentance itself is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love. There is a secret sweetness which accompanieth those tears of remorse, those meltings and relentings of a soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

The severities of a holy life, and that constant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are very troublesome to those who are only ruled and acted by an external law, and have no law in their minds inclining them to the performance of their duty: but where divine love possesseth the soul, it stands as sentinel to keep out every thing that may offend the beloved, and doth

disdainfully repulse those temptations which assault it: it complieth cheerfully, not only with explicit commands, but with the most secret notices of the beloved's pleasure, and is ingenuous in discovering what will be most grateful and acceptable unto him: it makes mortification and self-denial change their harsh and dreadful names, and become easy, sweet, and delightful things.

The Excellency of Charity

The next branch of the divine life is a universal charity and love. The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble and generous, than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world? whose wishes and designs are leveled at the good and welfare of the universe? which considereth every man's interest as its own? He who loveth his neighbor as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him: the malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love: he overlooks their injuries and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good; and

never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be reverenced and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: it inspireth the soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprizing and effecting the highest things. Those heroic actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of one's country, or of particular friendships: and certainly, a more extensive and universal affection must be much more powerful and efficacious.

The Pleasure that Attends It

Again, as charity flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure: it delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged, and to be delivered from those disquieting, as well as deformed, passions, malice, hatred and envy; and to become gentle, sweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to

my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possest with the greatest kindness and affection toward all men in the world. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others; their inward endowments and outward prosperity; every thing that did benefit and advantage them would afford me comfort and pleasure: and tho I should frequently meet with occasions of grief and compassion, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration, which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility: and the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom which governs the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it: and the hopes or possibility of men's after-happiness, might moderate their sorrow for their present misfortunes. Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith blessed souls do embrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above; and did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of heaven upon earth.

The Excellency of Purity

That which I named as a third branch of religion, was purity; and you may remember I described it to consist in a contempt of sensual pleasures, and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now the naming of this may suffice or recommend it as a most noble and excellent quality. There is no slavery so base, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them. Never can that person be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is sunk in the gross and feculent pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy: but the religious soul is of a more sublime and divine temper; it knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the way of holiness, for the obtaining any of these.

The Delight It Affords

And this purity is accompanied with a great deal of pleasure: whatsoever defiles the soul, disturbs it too: all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart and trouble behind them. Excess and intemperance, and all in-

ordinate lusts, are so much enemies to the health of the body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score; and if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be looked upon as any violent and uneasy restraint, but as the effect of better choice, that their minds are taken up in the pursuit of more sublime and refined delights, so that they can not be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent and passionate affection will easily forget his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the diversions he was wont to delight in. No wonder then, if souls overpowered with divine love despise inferior pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they may meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exercise and testify their affection: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honor to suffer for him.

The Excellency of Humility

The last branch of religion is humility; and however, to vulgar and carnal eyes, this may appear an abject, base, and despicable quality, yet really the soul of man is not capable of a higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride: but humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doting on trifles or admiring themselves because of some petty attainments. Noble and well-educated souls have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, and other such like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or despise those that want them: and as for inward worth and real goodness, the sense they have of the divine perfections makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attained, and be still endeavoring to surmount themselves, and make nearer approaches to those infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions, as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous; so that those who are most desirous of praise will be loath to command themselves. What are all those compliments and modes of civility, so

frequent in our ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of ourselves? And must not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are accounted so necessary a part of good breeding?

The Pleasure and Sweetness of a Humble Temper

Again, this grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquility. The proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all that converse with him, but most of all unto himself: every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing sufficient to content and please him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out; as if he himself were such a considerable person that God Almighty should do every thing to gratify him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do shake with every blast of wind: and every breath, every evil word will disquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble person hath the advantage, when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth of himself; and therefore he is not troubled at the matter,

but can easily bear those reproaches which wound the other to the soul. And withal, as he is less affected with injuries, so indeed he is less obnoxious unto them: "contention which cometh of pride" betrays a man into a thousand inconveniences, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with. True and genuine humility begetteth both a veneration and love among all wise and discerning persons, while pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honor it makes him pretend to.

But as the chief exercises of humility are those which relate unto Almighty God, so these are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness. It is impossible to express the great pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostration of their souls before God, when, having a deep sense of the divine majesty and glory, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God by a serious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments; when they understand the full sense and emphasis of the Psalmist's exclamation, "Lord! what is man?" and can utter it with the same affection. Never did any haughty and ambitious person receive the

praises and applauses of men with so much pleasure, as the humble and religious do renounce them: "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," etc.

Thus have I spoken something of the excellencies and advantage of religion in its several branches; but should be very injurious to the subject, did I pretend to have given any perfect account of it. Let us acquaint ourselves with it, my dear friend, let us acquaint ourselves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been spoken or written concerning it. But, if we may suppose the soul to be already awakened unto some longing desires, after so great a blessedness, it will be good to give them vent, and suffer them to issue forth in some such aspirations as these.

A Prayer

Good God! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called? How graciously hast thou joined our duty and happiness together, and prescribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward! And shall such silly worms be advanced to so great a height? wilt thou allow us to raise our eyes to thee? wilt thou admit and accept our affection? shall we receive the impression of

thy divine excellencies, by beholding and admiring them, and partake of thy infinite blessedness and glory, by loving thee, and rejoicing in them? O the happiness of those souls that have broken the fetters of self-love, and disentangled their affection from every narrow and particular good! whose understandings are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine! who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy sake! I am persuaded, O God, I am persuaded, that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my spirit be subdued, and till I come seriously to despise the world, and think nothing of myself. But, O when shall it once be? O when wilt thou come unto me, and satisfy my soul with thy likeness, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of conversation? Hast thou given me a prospect of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? Hast thou excited these desires in my soul, and wilt thou not also satisfy them? O teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forsake not the works of thine own hands.

The Despondent Thoughts of Some Newly Awakened to a Right Sense of Things

I have hitherto considered wherein true religion doth consist, and how desirable a thing it is; but when one sees how infinitely distant the common temper and frame of men are from it, he may perhaps be ready to despond, and give over, and think it utterly impossible to be attained: he may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself, and say, in the anguish and bitterness of his Spirit: They are happy indeed whose souls are awakened unto the divine life, who are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds; but, alas! I am quite of another constitution, and am not able to effect so mighty a change: if outward observances could have done the business, I might have hoped to acquit myself by diligence and care; but since nothing but a new nature can serve the turn, what am I able to do? I could bestow all my goods in oblations to God, or alms to the poor, but can not command that love and charity, without which this expense would profit me nothing (Acts 8:20). This gift of God can not be purchased with money (Song of Songs 3:7): if a man should give all the substance of

his house for love, it would utterly be contemned: I could pine and macerate my body, and undergo many hardships and troubles; but I can not get all my corruptions starved, nor my affections wholly weaned from earthly things: there is still some worldly desires lurking in my heart, and those vanities that I have shut out of the doors, are always getting in by the windows. I am many times convinced of my own meanness, of the weakness of my body, and the far greater weakness of my soul; but this doth rather beget indignation and discontent, than true humility in my spirit: and tho I should come to think meanly of myself yet I can not endure that others should think so too. In a word, when I reflect on my highest and most specious attainments, I have reason to suspect, that they are all but the effects of nature, the issues of self-love acting under several disguises; and this principle is so powerful, and so deeply rooted in me, that I can never hope to be delivered from the dominion of it. I may toss and turn as a door on the hinges, but can never get clear off, or be quite unhinged of self, which is still the center of all my motions; so that all the advantage I can draw from the discovery of religion is but to see, at a huge distance, that felicity which I am not able to reach; like a man in a ship-

wreck, who discerns the land, and envies the happiness of those who are there, but thinks it impossible for himself to get ashore.

The Unreasonableness of These Fears

These, I say, or such like desponding thoughts, may rise in the minds of those persons who begin to conceive somewhat more of the nature and excellency of religion than before: they have spied the land, and seen that it is exceeding good, that it floweth with milk and honey; but they find they have the children of Anak to grapple with, many powerful lusts and corruptions to overcome, and they fear they shall never prevail against them. But why should we give way to such discouraging suggestions? why should we entertain such unreasonable fears, which damp our spirits, and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way? Let us encourage ourselves, my dear friend, with those mighty aids we are to expect in this spiritual warfare; for greater is he that is for us, than all that can rise up against us: "The eternal God is our refuge (Deut. 33:27), and underneath are the everlasting arms. Let us be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10), for he it is that shall "tread down our enemies" (Ps. 44:5). God

hath a tender regard unto the souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare: he hath condescended to our weakness, and declared with an oath, that he hath no pleasure in our destruction. There is no such thing as despite or envy lodged in the bosom of that ever-blessed Being, whose name and nature is Love. He created us at first in a happy condition; and now when we are fallen from it (Ps. 89:19), "he hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save," hath committed the care of our souls to no meaner person than the Eternal Son of his love. It is he that is the Captain of our salvation, and what enemies can be too strong for us when we are fighting under his banner? Did not the Son of God come down from the bosom of his Father, and pitch his tabernacles among the sons of men, that he might recover and propagate the divine life, and restore the image of God in their souls? All the mighty works which he performed, all the sad afflictions which he sustained, had this for their scope and design; for this did he labor and toil, for this did he bleed and die (Isa. 26: 18, 19): "He was with child, he was in pain, and hath he brought forth nothing but wind? hath he wrought no deliverance in the earth (Isa. 53:11)? Shall he not see the travail of his soul?" Certainly it is impossible that this

great contrivance of heaven should prove abortive, that such a mighty undertaking should fail and miscarry: it hath already been effectual for the salvation of many thousands, who were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as we can suppose ourselves to be, and our (Heb. 7:24, 25) "High Priest continueth forever, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him"; he is tender and compassionate, he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations (Matt. 12:20): "A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." He hath sent out his Holy Spirit, whose sweet but powerful breathings are still moving up and down in the world, to quicken and revive the souls of men, and awaken them unto the sense and feeling of those divine things for which they were made, and is ready to assist such weak and languishing creatures as we are, in our essays toward holiness and felicity; and when once it hath taken hold of a soul, and kindled in it the smallest spark of divine love, it will be sure to preserve and cherish, and bring it forth into a flame (Song of Songs 8:7), "which many waters shall not quench, neither shall the floods be able to drown it." Whenever this day begins to dawn (2 Pet. 1:19) "and the day-star to

arise in the heart," it will easily dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and selfish affections of men, flee away as fast before it as the shades of night, when the sun cometh out of his chambers (Prov. 4:18): "For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Ps. 84:7). They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Zion."

Why should we think it impossible that true goodness and universal love should ever come to sway and prevail in our souls? Is not this their primitive state and condition, their native and genuine constitution as they came first from the hands of their Maker? Sin and corruption are but usurpers, and tho they have long kept the possession, "yet from the beginning it was not so." That inordinate self-love, which one would think were rooted in our very being and interwoven with the constitution of our nature, is nevertheless of foreign extraction, and had no place at all in the state of integrity. We have still so much reason left as to condemn it; our understandings are easily convinced that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than ourselves, who is infinitely better

than we; and our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not disordered and put out of tune: and is not he who made our souls, able to rectify and mend them again? shall we not be able, by his assistance, to vanquish and expel those violent intruders (Heb. 11:34), "and turn to flight the armies of the aliens?"

No sooner shall we take up arms in this holy war, but we shall have all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven, engaged in our party: the holy church throughout the world is daily interceding with God for the success of all such endeavors; and, doubtless, those heavenly hosts above are nearly concerned in the interests of religion, and infinitely desirous to see the divine life thriving and prevailing in this inferior world; and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by themselves in heaven: and may we not then encourage ourselves, as the prophet did his servant, when he showed him the horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6: 16, 17)? "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be against us."

We Must Do What We Can, and Depend on the Divine Assistance

Away then with all perplexing fears and desponding thoughts: to undertake vigorously, and rely confidently on the divine assistance, is more than half the conquest (1 Chron. 22:16): "Let us arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with us." It is true, religion in the souls of men is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavors can neither produce it alone nor merit those supernatural aids by which it must be wrought: the Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ be formed in us. But yet we must not expect that this whole work should be done without any concurring endeavors of our own: we must not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till Omnipotence pull us from thence. No, no, we must bestir ourselves, and exert those powers which we have already received: we must put forth ourselves to our utmost capacities, and then we may hope that (1 Cor. 15:58) "our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." All the art and industry of man can not form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field, it is the energy

of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect: it is God who (Ps. 104: 14) "causes the grass to grow, and herb for the service of man"; and yet nobody will say, that the labors of the husbandman are useless or unnecessary. So, likewise, the human soul is immediately created by God: it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child; and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary means for the propagation of mankind. Tho there must intervene a stroke of Omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our souls, yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare ourselves (Jer. 4: 3); "for we must break up our fallow ground, and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that so we may be more ready to receive the seeds of grace, and the dew of heaven." It is true, God hath been found of some who sought him not; he hath cast himself in their way, who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and stopt their course of a sudden: for so was St. Paul converted in his journey to Damascus. But certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men: tho he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavors. It shall there-

fore be my next work, to show what course we ought to take for attaining that blessed temper I have hitherto described. But here, if in delivering my own thoughts, I shall chance to differ from what is or may be said by others in this matter, I would not be thought to contradict and oppose them, more than physicians do when they prescribe several remedies for the same disease, which perhaps are all useful and good. Every one may propose the method he judges most proper and convenient; but he doth not thereby pretend that the cure can never be effected unless that be exactly observed. I doubt it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls as they have seen described in books; that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps have felt them in themselves) have too peremptorily prescribed unto others. God hath several ways of dealing with the souls of men, and it sufficeth if the work be accomplished, whatever the methods have been.

Again, tho in proposing directions, I must follow that order which the nature of things shall lead to; yet I do not mean that the same method should be so punctually observed in the practise, as if the latter rules were never

to be heeded till some considerable time have been spent in practising the former. The directions I intend are mutually conducive one to another, and are all to be performed as occasion shall serve, and we find ourselves enabled to perform them.

We Must Shun All Manner of Sin

But now, that I may detain you no longer, if we desire to have our souls molded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must seriously resolve, and carefully endeavor, to avoid and abandon all vicious and sinful practises. There can be no treaty of peace till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven; nor can we expect to have our distempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poison. Every wilful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul, and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness; and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, unless we cleanse our hands from vicious actions. Now in this case, we can not excuse ourselves by the pretense of impossibility; for sure our outward man is some way in our power: we have some command of our feet, and hands, and tongue,

nay, and of our thoughts and fancies too, at least so far as to divert them from impure and sinful objects and to turn our mind another way; and we should find this power and authority much strengthened and advanced, if we were careful to manage and exercise it. In the meanwhile, I acknowledge our corruptions are so strong, and our temptations so many, that it will require a great deal of stedfastness and resolution, of watchfulness and care, to preserve ourselves even in this degree of innocence and purity.

We Must Know What Things Are Sinful

And first, let us inform ourselves well what those sins are from which we ought to abstain. And here we must not take our measures from the maxims of the world, or the practises of those whom in charity we account good men. Most people have very light apprehension of these things, and are not sensible of any fault, unless it be gross and flagitious, and scarce reckon any so great as that which they call preciseness: and those who are more serious do many times allow themselves too great latitude and freedom. Alas! how much pride and vanity and passion and humor, how much weakness and folly and sin, doth every day

show itself in their converse and behavior? It may be they are humbled for it, and striving against it, and are daily gaining some ground; but then the progress is so small, and their failings so many, that we have need to choose an exacter pattern. Every one of us must answer for himself, and the practises of others will never warrant and secure us. It is the highest of folly to regulate our actions by any other standard than that by which they must be judged. If ever we would "cleanse our way," it must be "by taking heed thereto according to the word of God" (Ps. 119: 9); and that "word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), will certainly discover many things to be sinful and heinous, which pass for very innocent in the eyes of the world: let us therefore imitate the Psalmist, who saith, "Concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer" (Ps. 17:4). Let us acquaint ourselves with the strict and holy laws of our religion: let us consider the discourses of our blessed Savior (especially that divine sermon on the mount), and the writings of his holy apostles, where an ingenuous and

unbiased mind may clearly discern those limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined: and then let us never look upon any sin as light and inconsiderable; but be fully persuaded that the smallest is infinitely heinous in the sight of God and prejudicial to the souls of men; and that if we had the right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities as now we are with the highest crimes.

We Must Resist the Temptations to Sin By Considering the Evils They Will Draw On Us

But now, among those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some, unto which, through the disposition of our nature, or long custom, or the endearments of pleasure, we are so much wedded that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poem, who stood the whole day at the river side, till all the water should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are un-

willing to let go. We must not continue our sinful practises, in hopes that the divine grace will one day overpower our spirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity. Let us suppose the worst, that we are utterly destitute of any supernatural principle, and want that taste by which we should discern and abhor perverse things: yet sure we are capable of some considerations which may be of force to persuade us to this reformation of our lives. If the inward deformity and heinous nature of sin can not affect us, at least we may be frighted by those dreadful consequences that attend it: that same selfish principle which pusheth us forward unto the pursuit of sinful pleasures will make us loath to buy them at the rate of everlasting misery. Thus we may encounter self-love with its own weapons, and employ one natural inclination for repressing the exorbitances of another. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to consider seriously, what fearful thing it must needs be to irritate and offend that infinite Being on whom we hang and depend every moment, who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make us miserable, or his assistance to make us nothing. Let us frequently remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and how that after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and conversed a little long-

er among men, we must all go down into the dark and silent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguish and regret for all our sinful enjoyments: but then think what horror must needs seize the guilty soul to find itself naked and all alone before the severe and impartial judge of the world, to render an exact account, not only of its more important and considerable transactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and the swiftest and most secret thought that ever passed through the mind. Let us sometimes represent unto ourselves the terrors of that dreadful day (2 Pet. 3:10), when the foundation of the earth shall be shaken, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the present frame of nature be dissolved, and our eyes shall see the blessed Jesus (who came once into the world in all humility to visit us, to purchase pardon for us and beseech us to accept of it) now appearing in the majesty of his glory, and descending from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that have despised his mercy, and persisted in rebellion against him: when all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest (1 Cor. 4:5): when those secret impurities and subtle frauds whereof

the world did never suspect us shall be exposed and laid open to public view, and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, or else had altogether forgotten, shall be charged home upon our consciences with such evident convictions of guilt that we shall neither be able to deny nor excuse them. Then shall all the angels in heaven, and all the saints that ever lived on the earth, approve that dreadful sentence which shall be passed on wicked men; and those perhaps who did love and esteem them when they lived in the world, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one request for their deliverance. Let us consider the eternal punishment of damned souls, which are shadowed forth in Scripture by metaphors taken from those things that are most terrible and grievous in the world, and yet all do not suffice to convey unto our minds any full apprehensions of them. When we have joined together the importance of all these expressions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of misery and torment, we must still remember that all this comes infinitely short of the truth and reality of the thing.

It is true, this is a sad and melancholy subject; there is anguish and horror in the consideration of it; but sure, it must be in-

finitely more dreadful to endure it: and such thoughts as these may be very useful to fright us from the courses that would lead us thither; how fond soever we may be of sinful pleasures, the fear of hell would make us abstain: our most forward inclinations will startle and give back, when prest with that question in the prophet (Isa. 33:14), "Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

To this very purpose it is that the terrors of another world are so frequently represented in holy writ, and that in such terms as are most proper to affect and influence a carnal mind; those fears can never suffice to make any person truly good; but certainly they may restrain us from much evil, and have often made way for more ingenuous and kindly impressions.

We Must Keep a Constant Watch Over Ourselves

But it will not suffice to consider these things once and again, nor to form some resolutions of abandoning our sins unless we maintain a constant guard and be continually watching against them. Sometimes the mind is awakened to see the dismal consequences of a vicious life, and straight we are resolved to

reform; but, alas! it presently falleth asleep, and we lose that prospect which we had of things, and then temptations take the advantage; they solicit and importune us continually, and so do frequently engage our consent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruin of most people to live at adventure, and take part in every thing that comes in their way seldom considering what they are about to say or do. If we would have our resolutions take effect, we must take heed unto our ways, and set a watch before the door of our lips, and examine the motions that arise in our hearts, and cause them to tell us whence they come, and whither they go; whether it be pride or passion, or any corrupt and vicious humor, that prompteth us to any design, and whether God will be offended, or anybody harmed by it. And if we have no time for long reasonings, let us, at least, turn our eyes toward God, and place ourselves in his presence to ask his leave and approbation for what we do: let us consider ourselves under the all-seeing eye of that divine majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost corners of our soul. The sense and remembrance of the divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discover what is unlawful, and

to restrain us from it. There are some things a person could make shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look the Almighty God in the face and adventure upon them.

If we look unto him, we shall be lightened; if we "set him always before us," he will "guide us by his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk."

We Must Often Examine Our Actions

This care and watchfulness over our actions must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our sins, by an humble and sorrowful acknowledgment of them; but also that we may reenforce and strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist the temptations by which we have been formerly foiled. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, tho it did first drop from a heathen pen, that before we betake ourselves to rest, we renew and examine all the passages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss, and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course in another. This may be called the very art of virtuous living, and would contribute wonderfully to advance

our reformation, and preserve our innocence. But, withal, we must not forget to implore the divine assistance, especially against those sins that do most easily beset us; and, tho it be supposed that our hearts are not yet molded into that spiritual frame which should render our devotions acceptable, yet, methinks, such considerations as have been proposed to deter us from sin may also stir us up to some natural seriousness, and make our prayers against it as earnest, at least, as they are wont to be against other calamities: and I doubt not but God, who heareth the cry of the ravens, will have some regard even to such petitions as proceed from those natural passions which himself hath implanted in us. Beside, that those prayers against sin will be powerful engagements on ourselves to excite us to watchfulness and care; and common ingenuity will make us ashamed to relapse into those faults which we have lately bewailed before God, and against which we have begged his assistance.

We Must Restrain Ourselves in Many Lawful Things

Thus are we to make the first essay for recovering the divine life, by restraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out

into sinful practises. But now I must add, that Christian prudence will teach us to abstain from gratifications that are not simply unlawful, and that, not only that we may secure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard, if we should strain our liberty to the utmost point; but also, that hereby we may weaken the forces of nature, and teach our appetites to obey. We must do with ourselves as prudent parents with their children, who cross their wills in many little indifferent things to make them manageable and submissive in more considerable instances. He who would mortify the pride and vanity of his spirit should stop his ears to the most deserved praises, and sometimes forbear his just vindication from the censures and aspersions of others, especially if they reflect only upon his prudence and conduct, and not on his virtue and innocence. He who would check a revengeful humor, would do well to deny himself the satisfaction of representing unto others the injuries which he hath sustained; and if we would so take heed to our ways that we sin not with our tongue, we must accustom ourselves much to solitude and silence, and sometimes, with the psalmist, "hold our peace even from good," till once we have gotten some command over that unruly member. Thus, I say, we may bind up our natural in-

clinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals; but it is not enough to have them under violence and restraint.

We Must Strive to Put Ourselves Out of Love With the World

Our next essay must be, to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress the souls of men, and retard their motions toward God and heaven; and this we must do by possessing our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and everybody can make declamations upon it; but, alas! how few understand and believe what they say! These notions float in our brains, and come sliding off our tongues, but we have no deep impression of them on our spirits; we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell, that all the glory and splendor, all the pleasures and enjoyments of the world are vanity and nothing; and yet these nothings take up all our thought, and engross all our affections; they stifle the better inclinations of our soul, and inveigle us into many a sin.

It may be, in a sober mood we give them the slight, and resolve to be no longer deluded with them; but these thoughts seldom outlive the next temptation! the vanities which we have shut out at the door get in at the postern: there are still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us! and after we have been frustrated a thousand times, we must continually be repeating the experiment: the least difference of circumstances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that satisfaction in one thing which we have missed in another; but could we once get clearly off, and come to a real and serious contempt of worldly things, this were a very considerable advancement in our way. The soul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and unextinguishable thirst, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at some object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the world, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the sun, it would quickly search after some higher and more excellent object to satisfy its ardent and importunate cravings; and being no longer dazzled with glittering vanities, would fix on that supreme and all-sufficient Good, where it would discover such beauty and sweetness as would charm and overpower all its affections. The love of the world and the love of

God are like the scales of a balance! as the one falleth, the other doth rise: when our natural inclinations prosper, and the creature is exalted in our soul, religion is faint, and doth languish; but when earthly objects wither away, and lose their beauty, and the soul begins to cool and flag in its prosecution of them, then the seeds of grace take root, and the divine life begins to flourish and prevail. It doth, therefore, nearly concern us, to convince ourselves of the emptiness and vanity of creature-enjoyments, and reason our heart out of love with them: let us seriously consider all that our reason, or our faith, our own experience, or the observation of others, can suggest to this effect! let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really persuaded of it. Amid all our pursuits and designs, let us stop and ask ourselves, For what end is all this? at what do I aim? can the gross and muddy pleasures of sense, or a heap of white and yellow earth, or the esteem and affection of silly creatures, like myself, satisfy a rational and immortal soul? have I not tried these things already? will they have a higher relish, and yield me more contentment to-morrow than yesterday, or the next year than they did the last? There may be some little difference betwixt for which I am now pursuing,

and that which I enjoyed before; but sure, my former enjoyments did show as pleasant, and promise as fair, before I attained them; like the rainbow, they looked very glorious at a distance, but when I approached I found nothing but emptiness and vapor. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments! . . .

We Must Do Those Outward Actions That Are Commanded

When we have got our corruptions restrained, and our natural appetites and inclinations toward worldly things in some measure subdued, we must proceed to such exercises as have a more immediate tendency to excite and awaken the divine life: and, first, let us endeavor conscientiously to perform those duties which religion doth require, and whereunto it would incline us, if it did prevail in our souls. If we can not get our inward disposition presently changed, let us study, at least, to regulate our outward deportment: if our hearts be not yet inflamed with divine love, let us, however, own our allegiance to that Infinite Majesty, by attending his service, and listening to his word, by speaking reverently of his name, and praising his good-

ness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him. If we want that charity and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have toward our neighbors, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: if our hearts be haughty and proud, we must, nevertheless, study a modest and humble deportment. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet they may help us forward to better things. The apostle indeed telleth us, that "bodily exercise profiteth little": but he seems not to affirm that it is altogether useless; it is always good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to pity our weakness, and assist our feeble endeavors; and when true charity and humility, and other graces of the divine Spirit, come to take root in our souls, they will exert themselves more freely, and with less difficulty, if we have before been accustomed to express them in our outward conversations. Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocrisy, tho our actions do thus somewhat outrun our affections, seeing they do still proceed from a sense of our duty; and our design is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become so.

We Must Endeavor to Form Internal Acts of Devotion, Charity, Etc.

But as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the soul to mold it to a right temper and frame, so ought we to be most frequent and sedulous in the exercise of them. Let us be often lifting up our hearts toward God; and if we do not say that we love him above all things, let us, at least, acknowledge that it is our duty, and would be our happiness, so to do: let us lament the dishonor done unto him by foolish and sinful men, and applaud the praises and adorations that are given him by that blessed and glorious company above: let us resign and yield ourselves up unto him a thousand times, to be governed by his laws, and be disposed of at his pleasure: and tho our stubborn hearts should start back and refuse, yet let us tell him, we are convinced that his will is always just and good; and, therefore, desire him to do with us whatsoever he pleaseth, whether he will or not. And so, for begetting in us a universal charity toward men, we must be frequently putting up wishes for their happiness, and blessing every person that we see; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miserable, we may second it with earnest desires that God

would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their distresses.

Thus should we exercise ourselves unto godliness, and when we are employing the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to strike in, and elevate these acts of our soul beyond the pitch of nature, and give them a divine impression; and, after the frequent reiteration of these, we shall find ourselves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and ease.

Consideration a Great Instrument in Religion

I shall mention but two other means for begetting that holy and divine temper of spirit which is the subject of the present discourse: and the first is a deep and serious consideration of the truths of our religion, and that both as to the certainty and importance of them. The assent which is ordinarily given to divine truths is very faint and languid, very weak and ineffectual, flowing only from a blind inclination to follow that religion which is in fashion, or a lazy indifferency and unconcernedness whether things be so or not. Men are unwilling to quarrel with the religion of their country, and since all their neighbors are Christians, they are content to be so too;

but they are seldom at the pains to consider the evidences of those truths, or to ponder the importance and tendency of them; and thence it is that they have so little influence on their affections and practise. Those spiritless and paralytic thoughts (as one doth rightly term them) are not able to move the will, and direct the hand: we must therefore endeavor to work up our minds to a serious belief and full persuasion of divine truths, unto a sense and feeling of spiritual things: our thoughts must dwell upon them, till we be both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them. Let us urge forward our spirits, and make them approach the invisible world, and fix our minds upon immaterial things, till we clearly perceive that these are no dreams; nay, that all things are dreams and shadows besides them. When we look about us, and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight toward that omnipotent wisdom and goodness which did at first produce, and doth still establish and uphold the same. When we reflect upon ourselves, let us consider that we are not a mere piece of organized matter, a curious and well-contrived engine; that there is more in us than flesh, and blood, and bones, even a divine spark, capable to

know, and love, and enjoy our Maker; and tho it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpish companion, yet ere long it shall be delivered and can subsist without the body, as well as that can do without the clothes which we throw off at our pleasure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this scene of misery, and folly, and sin, and raise them toward that more vast and glorious world, whose innocent and blessed inhabitants solace themselves eternally in the divine presence, and know no other passion, but an unmixed joy, and an unbounded love. And then consider how the blessed Son of God came down to this lower world to live among us, and die for us, that he might bring us a portion of the same felicity; and think how he hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and is now set down on the "right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3), and yet is not the less mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and presenteth them unto his Father, and is daily visiting his Church with the influences of his Spirit, as the sun reacheth us with his beams.

To Beget Divine Love, We Must Consider the Excellency of the Divine Nature

The serious and frequent consideration of these, and such other divine truths, is the most proper method to beget that lively faith which is the foundation of religion, the spring and root of the divine life. Let me further suggest some particular subjects of meditation for producing the several branches of it. And, first, to inflame our souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness toward us. It is little we know of the divine perfections; and yet that little may suffice to fill our souls with admiration and love, to ravish our affections, as well as to raise our wonder: for we are not merely creatures of sense, that we should be incapable of any other affection but that which entereth by the eyes. The character of any excellent person whom we have never seen, will many times engage our hearts, and make us deeply concerned in all his interests: and what is it, I pray you, that engages us so much to those with whom we converse? I can not think that it is merely the color of their face, or their comely proportions, for then we should fall in love with

statues and pictures and flowers: these outward accomplishments may a little delight the eye, but would never be able to prevail so much on the heart, if they did not represent some vital perfection. We either see or apprehend some greatness of mind, or vigor of spirit, or sweetness of disposition; some sprightliness, or wisdom, or goodness, which charm our spirit, and command our love. Now these perfections are not obvious to the sight, the eyes can only discern the signs and effects of them; and if it be the understanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we can not but discover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our hearts, if we did seriously view and regard them. Shall we not be infinitely more transported with that almighty wisdom and goodness which fills the universe, and displays itself in all the parts of the creation, which establisheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of providence, and keepeth the world from disorder and ruin, than with the faint rays of the very same perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we dote on the scattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable stupidity and

blindness. Whatever we find lovely in a friend, or in a saint, ought not to engross, but to elevate our affection; we should conclude with ourselves, that if there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be so much splendor in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteness of the objects as if God were at too great a distance for our converse or our love: "He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27): we can not open our eyes, but we must behold some footsteps of his glory; and we can not turn them toward him, but we shall be sure to find his intent upon us, waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to entertain the most intimate fellowship and communion with us. Let us therefore endeavor to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature: let us consider all that his works do declare, or his word doth discover of him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him, which was made in our own nature by his Son, who was "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3), and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is and what we ought to be. Let us represent

him unto our minds as we find him described in the gospel; and there we shall behold the perfections of the divine nature, tho covered with the vail of human infirmities; and when we have framed unto ourselves the clearest notion that we can of a Being infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness, the author and fountain of all perfections, let us fix the eyes of our soul upon it (Lam. 3:51), that our eyes may affect our heart, and while we are musing the fire will burn (Ps. 39:3).

We Should Meditate On God's Goodness and Love

Especially, if hereunto we add the consideration of God's favor and good will toward us; nothing is more powerful to engage our affection, than to find that we are beloved. Expressions of kindness are always pleasing and acceptable unto us, tho the person should be otherwise mean and contemptible: but, to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of heaven hath any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us, how must it overcome our spirits and melt our hearts, and put our whole soul into a flame! now, as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love toward man; so all his works do loudly

proclaim it: he gave us our being, and, by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well-furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities; he raineth down blessings from heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision; he giveth us our food and raiment, and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweeteneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every faculty with suitable objects: the eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our safety when we are asleep, neither minding him nor ourselves. But, lest we should think these testimonies of his kindness less considerable, because they are the easy issues of his omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himself to us; he hath testified his affection to us, by suffering as well as by doing; and, because he could not suffer in his own nature, he assumed ours. The eternal Son of God did clothe himself with the infirmities of our flesh, and left the company of those innocent and blessed spirits who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wrestle with the obstinacy of that rebellious race, to

reduce them to their allegiance and fidelity, and then to offer himself up as a sacrifice and propitiation for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance; that the god of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast. Methinks this doth someway adumbrate God's method of dealing with men: he hath long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself, to testify his affection and engage theirs. The account which we have of our Savior's life in the gospel doth all along present us with the story of his love; all the pains that he took, and the troubles that he endured, were the wonderful effects and uncontrollable evidences of it. But, O that last, that dismal scene! is it possible to remember it, and question his kindness, or deny him ours? Here, here it is, my dear friend, that we should fix our most serious and solemn thoughts, "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love; may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the

breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:17, 18, 19).

We ought also frequently to reflect on those particular tokens of favor and love, which God hath bestowed on ourselves; how long he hath borne with our follies and sins, and waited to be gracious unto us, wrestling, as it were, with the stubbornness of our hearts, and essaying every method to reclaim us. We should keep a register in our minds of all the eminent blessings and deliveranees we have met with, some whereof have been so conveyed, that we might clearly perceive they were not the issues of chance, but the gracious effects of the divine favor, and the signal returns of our prayers. Nor ought we to embitter the thoughts of these things with any harsh or unworthy suspicion, as if they were designed on purpose to enhance our guilt, and heighten our eternal damnation. No, no, my friend, God is love, and he hath no pleasure in the ruin of his creatures. If they abuse his goodness, and turn his grace into wantonness, and thereby plunge themselves into greater depth of guilt and misery, this is the effect of their obstinate wickedness, and not the design of those benefits which he bestows.

If these considerations had once begotten

in our hearts a real love and affection toward Almighty God, that would easily lead us into the other branches of religion, and therefore I shall need say the less of them.

To Beget Charity, We Must Remember that All Men Are Nearly Related Unto God

We shall find our hearts enlarged in charity toward men, by considering the relation wherein they stand unto God, and the impresses of his image which are stamped upon them. They are not only his creatures, the workmanship of his hands, but such of whom he taketh special care, and for whom he hath a very dear and tender regard, having laid the designs of their happiness before the foundations of the world, and being willing to live and converse with them to all the ages of eternity. The meanest and most contemptible person whom we behold is the offspring of heaven, one of the children of the Most High; and however unworthy he might behave himself of that relation, so long as God hath not abdicated and disowned him by a final sentence, he will have us to acknowledge him as one of his, and as such to embrace him with a sincere and cordial affection. You know what a great concernment we are wont to have for those that do

any ways belong to the person whom we love; how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity to gratify the child or servant of a friend; and, sure, our love toward God would as naturally spring forth in charity toward men, did we mind the interest that he is pleased to take in them, and consider that every soul is dearer unto him than all the material world; and that he did not account the blood of his Son too great a price for their redemption.

That They Carry His Image Upon Them

Again, as all men stand in a near relation to God, so they have still so much of his image stamped on them as may oblige and excite us to love them. In some this image is more eminent and conspicuous, and we can discern the lovely traces of wisdom and goodness; and tho in others it may be miserably sullied and defaced, yet it is not altogether razed, some lineaments at least do still remain. All men are endued with rational and immortal souls, with understandings and wills capable of the highest and most excellent things; and if they be at present disordered and put out of tune by wickedness and folly, this may indeed move our compassion, but ought not, in reason, to extinguish our love. When we see

a person of a rugged humor and perverse disposition, full of malice and dissimulation, very foolish and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that presents itself unto us under an idea so little grateful and lovely: but when we shall consider these evil qualities as the diseases and distempers of a soul which, in itself, is capable of all that wisdom and goodness wherewith the best of saints have ever been adorned, and which may, one day, come to be raised unto such heights of perfection as shall render it a fit companion for the holy angels, this will turn our aversion into pity, and make us behold him with such resentments as we should have when we look upon a beautiful body that was mangled with wounds, or disfigured by some loathsome disease; and however we hate the vices, we shall not cease to love the man.

To Beget Purity, We Should Consider the Dignity of Our Nature

In the next place, for purifying our souls, and disentangling our affections from the pleasures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder on the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the soul of man to be sunk and im-

mersed in brutish and sensual lust, or amused with airy and fantastical delights, and so to lose the relish of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the Christian be starved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us, in a right sense, to reverence and stand in awe of ourselves; it would beget a modesty and shamefacedness, and make us very shy and reserved in the use of the most innocent and allowable pleasures.

We Should Meditate Often On the Joys of Heaven

It will be very effectual to the same purpose, that we frequently raise our minds toward heaven, and represent to our thoughts the joys that are at God's right hand, those pleasures that endure forevermore; "for every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us as "strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," and keep ourselves "unspotted from this world," that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we must see that our notions of heaven

be not gross and carnal, that we dream not of a Mohammedan paradise, nor rest on those metaphors and similitudes by which these joys are sometimes represented: for this might perhaps have a quite contrary effect: it might entangle us further in carnal affections, and we should be ready to indulge ourselves in a very liberal foretaste of those pleasures wherein we had placed our everlasting felicity. But when we come once to conceive aright of those pure and spiritual pleasures; when the happiness we propose to ourselves is from the sight, and love, and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and forethoughts of that blessed estate; O how mean and contemptible will all things here below appear in our eyes! With what disdain shall we reject the gross and muddy pleasures that would deprive us of those celestial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indispose us for them!

Humility Arises From the Consideration of Our Failings

The last branch of religion is humility, and sure we can never want matter of consideration for begetting it. All our wickedness and imperfections, all our follies and our sins, may help to pull down that fond and over-

weening conceit which we are apt to entertain of ourselves. That which makes anybody esteem us is their knowledge or apprehension of some little good and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us; were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that pass in our heart, in the best and most serious day of our life, being exposed unto public view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: and now, however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious of them ourselves, and some serious reflections upon them would much qualify and allay the vanity of our spirits. Thus holy men have come really to think worse of themselves than of any other person in the world: not but that they knew that gross and scandalous vices are, in their nature, more heinous than the surprisals of temptations and infirmity; but because they were much more intent on their own miscarriages than on those of their neighbors, and did consider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might be supposed to diminish and alleviate the other.

Thoughts of God Give Us the Lowest Thoughts of Ourselves

But it is well observed by a pious writer, that the deepest and most pure humility doth not so much arise from the consideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine purity and goodness. Our spots never appear so clearly as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never seem less in our own eyes than when we look down upon ourselves from on high. O how little, how nothing, do all those shadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value ourselves! That humility, which cometh from a view of our own sinfulness and misery, is more turbulent and boisterous; but the other layeth us full as low, and wanteth nothing of the anguish and vexation wherewith our souls are apt to boil when they are the nearest object of our thoughts.

Prayer Another Instrument of Religion

There remains yet another means for begetting a holy and religious disposition in the soul; and that is, fervent and hearty prayer.

Holiness is the gift of God; indeed the greatest gift he doth bestow or we are capable to receive; and he hath promised his Holy Spirit to those that ask it of him. In prayer we make the nearest approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of heaven: then it is that the Sun of righteousness doth visit us with his directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth his image on our souls. I can not now insist on the advantages of this exercise, or the dispositions wherewith it ought to be performed: and there is no need I should, there being so many books that treat on this subject.

The Advantages of Mental Prayer

I shall only tell you that, as there is one sort of prayer wherein we make use of the voice, which is necessary in public, and may sometimes have its own advantages in private; and another wherein, tho we utter no sound, yet we conceive the expressions and form the words, as it were, in our minds; so there is a third and more sublime kind of prayer, wherein the soul takes a higher flight, and having collected all its forces by long and serious meditation, it darteth itself (if I may so speak) toward God in sighs and groans, and

thoughts too big for expression. As when, after a deep contemplation of the divine perfections appearing in all his works of wonder, it addresseth itself unto him in the profoundest adoration of his majesty and glory: or, when after sad reflections on its vileness and miscarriages, it prostrates itself before him with the greatest confusion and sorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his presence: or when, having well considered the beauty of holiness and the unspeakable felicity of those that are truly good, it panteth after God, and sendeth up such vigorous and ardent desires as no words can sufficiently express, continuing and repeating each of these acts as long as it finds itself upheld by the force and impulse of the previous meditation.

This mental prayer is of all other the most effectual to purify the soul and dispose it unto a holy and religious temper, and may be termed the great secret of devotion, and one of the most powerful instruments of the divine life: and it may be the apostle hath a peculiar respect unto it, when he saith, that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that can not be uttered"; or, the original may bear, "that can not be worded." Yet I do not so recommend this sort of prayer, as to supercede the

use of the other; for we have so many several things to pray for, and every petition of this nature requireth so much time and so great an intention of spirit, that it were not easy therein to overtake them all: to say nothing, that the deep sighs and heavings of the heart, which are wont to accompany it, are something oppressive to nature, and make it hard to continue long in them. But certainly a few of these inward aspirations, will do more than a great many fluent and melting expressions.

Religion Is to Be Advanced By the Same Means By Which It Is Begun

Thus, my friend, I have briefly proposed the method which I judge proper for molding the soul into a holy frame; and the same means which serve to beget this divine temper must still be practised for strengthening and advancing it; and therefore I shall recommend but one more for that purpose, and that is the frequent and conscientious use of that holy sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the soul. All the instruments of religion do meet together in this ordinance; and while we address our-

selves unto it, we are to practise all the rules which were mentioned before. Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on ourselves; then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace doth exercise itself with the greatest activity and vigor; all the subjects of contemplation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, doth the soul make its most powerful sallies toward heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that bedwarfs our religion, and makes us continue of so low a size.

A Prayer

And now, O most gracious God, Father and Fountain of mercy and goodness, who hast blest us with the knowledge of our happiness and the way that leadeth unto it! excite in our souls such ardent desires after the one, as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution of the other. Let us neither presume on our own strength, nor distrust thy divine assistance; but while we are doing our utmost endeavors, teach us still to depend on thee

for success. Open our eyes, O God, and teach us out of thy law. Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a knowledge to discern perverse things. O that our ways were directed to keep thy statutes! then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all thy commandments. Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our affections or betray us to any sin: turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy law. Fill our souls with such a deep sense and full persuasion of those great truths which thou hast revealed in the gospel as may influence and regulate our whole conversation; and that the life which we henceforth live in the flesh, we may live through faith in the Son of God. O that the infinite perfections of thy blessed nature and the astonishing expressions of thy goodness and love may conquer and overpower our hearts, that they may be constantly rising toward thee in flames of devoutest affection, and enlarging themselves in sincere and cordial love toward all the world for thy sake; and that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy thee.

Henry Scougal

Finally, O God! grant that the consideration of what thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspirations toward thee. We desire to resign and give up ourselves to the conduct of thy Holy Spirit: lead us in thy truth, and teach us, for thou art the God of our salvation; guide us with thy counsel, and afterward receive us unto glory, for the merits and intercession of thy blessed Son our Savior. AMEN.

A Prayer of Rufus Ellis

May we lift our hearts to thee this day in great thankfulness, humbly acknowledging thy mercy and thy truth, thy large and tender providence, thy nearness to us at all times, thy Spirit of wisdom and might and peace, the works and the joys and the discipline of earth which thou dost appoint, the promises that lay hold of things to come. O Spirit of all grace and benediction, Father of our dear Lord and Savior, coming to us in him and in his, Creator of these dying bodies, Life and Light of these undying souls, thy gifts are

new upon us every morning. May thy great love redeem us; and from the light of a true life below may we pass at length into that presence where there is fulness of joy and abundance of peace forever. AMEN.

SELECTIONS FROM

The Rise and Progress of Religion In the Soul

BY

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D.D.

PHILIP DODDRIDGE

English non-conformist clergyman and writer; born in London June 26, 1702; died at Lisbon, October 26, 1751. His education commenced in the home, then he went to a private school, followed by attendance at the grammar school at Kingston-upon-Thames. His theological education was influenced by Samuel Clarke, a Presbyterian minister. He became minister at Kibworth, Leicestershire, in 1723, without ordination or profession of faith. Two years later he removed to the neighboring town of Market Harborough, and entered into a joint pastorate with David Some. In 1729 he became the head of a new academy at Market Harborough and in the same year accepted a call to a pastorate at Northampton, where he was ordained by eight ministers. His best-known works are: "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" (London, 1745), and "The Family Expositor, or a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament, with Notes" (6 vols., 1739-56). Among the best known of his hymns are "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve," "Grace, 'tis a charming sound," and "O happy day, that fixed my choice."

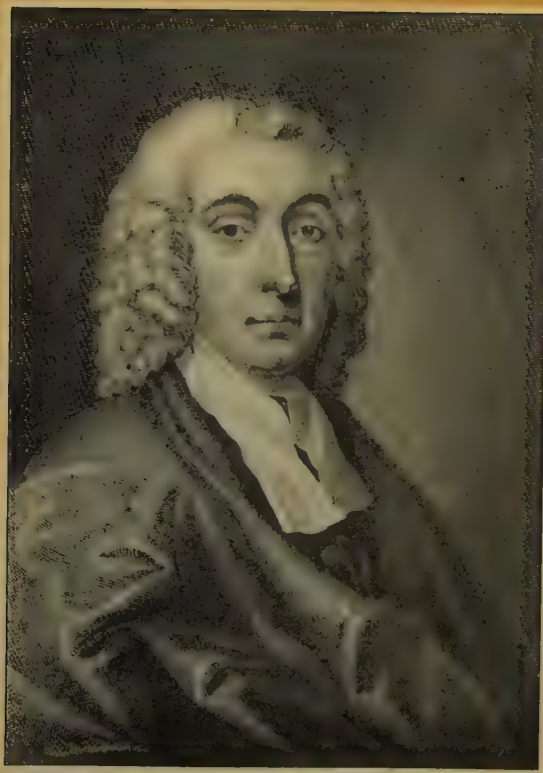
An Humble Supplication for the Influences of Divine Grace, to Form and Strengthen Religion In the Soul

Blessed God! I sincerely acknowledge before thee mine own weakness and insufficiency for any thing that is spiritually good. I have experienced it a thousand times; and yet my foolish heart would again trust itself (Prov. 28:26), and form resolutions in its own strength. But let this be the first fruits of thy gracious influence upon it, to bring it to an humble distrust of itself, and to a repose on thee.

Abundantly do I rejoice, O Lord, in the kind assurances which thou givest me of thy readiness to bestow liberally and richly so great a benefit. I do, therefore, according to thy condescending invitation, "come with boldness to the throne of grace, that I may find grace to help in every time of need" (Heb. 4:16). I mean not, O Lord God, to turn thy grace into wantonness or perverseness (Jude, verse 4), or to make my weakness an excuse for my negligence and sloth. I confess thou hast already given me more strength than I

have used; and I charge it upon myself, and not on thee, that I have not long since received still more abundant supplies. I desire for the future to be found diligent in the use of all appointed means; in the neglect of which, I well know, that petitions like these would be a profane mockery, and might much more probably provoke thee to take away what I have than prevail upon thee to impart more: but firmly resolving to exert myself to the utmost, I earnestly entreat the communications of thy grace, that I may be enabled to fulfil that resolution.

"Be surety, O Lord, unto thy servant for good" (Ps. 119:122). Be pleased to shed abroad thy sanctifying influences on my soul, to form me for every duty thou requirest. Implant, I beseech thee, every grace and virtue deep in mine heart; and maintain the happy temper in the midst of those assaults, from within and from without, to which I am continually liable, while I am still in this world and carry about with me so many infirmities. Fill my breast, I beseech thee, with good affections toward thee, my God, and toward my fellow-creatures. Remind me always of thy presence; and may I remember, that every secret sentiment of my soul is open to thee. May I, therefore, guard against the first risings of sin, and the first approaches



Philip Doddridge

to it: and that Satan may not find room for his evil suggestions, I earnestly beg that thou, Lord, wouldst fill my heart with thine Holy Spirit, and take up thy residence there. "Dwell in me, and walk with me" (2 Cor. 6:16), "and let my body be the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 6:19).

May I be so "joined to Christ Jesus, my Lord, as to be one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:17), and feel his invigorating influences continually bearing me on, superior to every temptation, and to every corruption; that while the "youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall, I may so wait upon the Lord as to renew my strength" (Isa. 40:30, 31), and may go on from one degree of faith and love, and zeal, and holiness, to another, till I "appear perfect before thee in Zion" (Ps. 84:7), to drink in immortal vigor and joy from thee, as the everlasting fountain of both, through Jesus Christ, my Lord, "in whom I have righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24), and to whom I desire ever to ascribe the praise of all my improvements in both. AMEN.

A Prayer for One Who Earnestly Desires to Approach to the Table of the Lord, Yet Has Some Remaining Doubts Concerning His Right to That Solemn Ordinance

Blessed Lord! I adore thy wise and gracious appointments for the edification of thy Church in holiness and in love. I thank thee that thou hast commanded thy servants to form themselves into societies; and I adore my gracious Savior who has instituted, as with his dying breath, the holy solemnity of his supper, to be through all ages a memorial of his dying love, and a bond of that union which it is his sovereign pleasure that his people should preserve. I hope thou, Lord, art witness to the sincerity with which I desire to give myself up to thee; and that I may call thee to record on my soul, that if I now hesitate about this particular manner of doing it, it is not because I would allow myself to break any of thy commands or to slight any of thy favors. I trust thou knowest that my present delay arises only from an uncertainty as to my own duty, and a fear of profaning holy things by an unworthy approach to them. Yet surely, O Lord, if thou hast given me a reverence for thy command, a desire of communion with

thee, and a willingness to devote myself wholly to thy service, I may regard it as a token for good that thou art disposed to receive me, and that I am not wholly unqualified for an ordinance which I so highly honor and so earnestly desire; I therefore make it mine humble request unto thee, O Lord, this day, that thou wouldst graciously be pleased to instruct me in my duty and to teach me the way which I should take! Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart (Ps. 26:2). Is there any secret sin in the love and practise of which I would indulge? Is there any of thy precepts in the habitual breach of which I would allow myself? I trust I can appeal to thee as a witness that there is not. Let me not, then, wrong mine own soul by a causeless and sinful absence from thy sacred table. But grant, O Lord, I beseech thee, that thy word, thy providence, and thy Spirit may so concur as to make my "way plain before me" (Prov. 15:19). Scatter my remaining doubts, if thou seest they have no just foundation. Fill me with a more assured faith, with a more ardent love; and plead thine own cause with my heart in such a manner as that I may not be able any longer to delay that approach which, if I am thy servant indeed, is equally my duty and my privilege. In the mean-

time, grant that it may never be long out of my thoughts; but that I may give all diligence, if there be any remaining occasion of doubt, to remove it by a more affectionate concern to avoid whatever is displeasing to the eyes of thine holiness, and to practise the full extent of my duty. May the views of Christ crucified be so familiar to my mind, and may a sense of his dying love so powerfully constrain my soul, that my own growing experience may put it out of all question that I am one of those for whom he intended this feast of love.

And even now, as joined to thy churches in spirit and in love, tho not in so express and intimate a bond as I could wish, would I heartily pray that thy "blessing may be on all thy people"; that thou "wouldst feed thine heritage, and lift them up for ever" (Ps. 28:9). May every Christian society flourish in knowledge, in holiness, and in love! May all "thy priests be clothed with salvation," that by their means "thy chosen people may be made joyful" (Ps. 132:16). And may there be a glorious accession to thy churches everywhere, of those who may fly "to them as a cloud, and as doves to their windows" (Isa. 60:8). May thy table, O Lord, be "furnished with guests" (Matt. 22:10), and may all that " love thy salvation say,

Let the Lord be magnified, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants" (Ps. 35: 27). And I earnestly pray that all who profess to have received Christ Jesus the Lord may be duly careful to walk in him (Col. 2: 6), and that we may be all preparing for the general assembly of the first-born, and may join in that nobler and more immediate worship where all these types and shadows shall be laid aside; where even these memorials shall be no longer necessary, but a living, present Redeemer shall be the everlasting joy of those who here in his absence have delighted to commemorate his death. AMEN.

A Prayer Suited to the State of a Soul Who Desires to Attain the Life Recommended

Blessed God! . . . thou art the great fountain of being and of happiness; and as from thee my being was derived, so from thee my happiness directly flows; and the nearer I am to thee, the purer and the more delicious is the stream. "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light" may I "see light" (Ps. 36: 9). The great object of my final hope is to dwell for ever with thee; give

me now some foretaste of that delight. Give me, I beseech thee, to experience the blessedness of "that man who feareth the Lord, and who delighteth greatly in his commandments" (Ps. 112:1); and so form my heart by thy grace, that I may "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (Prov. 23:17).

To thee may my awaking thoughts be directed, and with the first ray of light that visits mine opening eyes, "lift up, O Lord, the light of thy countenance upon me" (Ps. 4:6). When my faculties are roused from that broken state in which they lay while buried, and as it were annihilated, in sleep, may my first actions be consecrated to thee, O God, who givest me light; who givest me, as it were, every morning a new life and a new reason. Enable my heart to pour itself out before thee with a filial reverence, freedom, and endearment! And may I harken to God, as I desire that he should harken unto me. May thy word be read with attention and pleasure. May my soul be delivered into the mold of it; and may I "hide it in mine heart, that I sin not against thee" (Ps. 119:11). Animated by the great motives there suggested, may I every morning be renewing the dedication of myself to thee, through Jesus Christ thy beloved Son; and be deriving from him new supplies of that

blessed Spirit of thine, whose influences are the life of my soul.

And being thus prepared, do thou, Lord, lead me forth by the hand to all the duties and events of the day. In that calling wherein thou hast been pleased to call me "may I abide with thee" (1 Cor. 7:20); not being "slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). May I know the value of time, and always improve it to the best advantage in such duties as thou hast assigned me, how low soever they may seem or how painful soever they may be. To thy glory, O Lord, may the labors of life be pursued; and to thy glory may the refreshments of it be sought. "Whether I eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do" (1 Cor. 10:31), may that end still be kept in view and may it be attained; and may every refreshment and release from business prepare me to serve thee with greater vigor and resolution.

May mine eye be watchful to observe the descent of mercies from thee; and may a grateful sense of thine hand in them add a favor and relish to all. And when afflictions come, which, in a world like this I would accustom myself to expect, may I remember that they come from thee; and may that fully reconcile me to them, while I firmly believe that the same love which gives us our daily

bread appoints us our daily crosses, which I would learn to take up, that I may "follow my dear Lord" (Mark 8:34), with a temper like that which he manifested when ascending Calvary for my sake; saying like him, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). And when I enter into temptation, do thou, Lord, "deliver me from evil" (Matt. 6:13). Make me sensible, I entreat thee, of my own weakness, that my heart may be raised to thee for present communications of proportionable strength. When I am engaged in the society of others, may it be my desire and my care that I may do and receive as much good as possible, and may I continually answer the great purposes of life by honoring thee and diffusing useful knowledge and happiness in the world. And when I am alone, may I remember my heavenly Father is with me; and may I enjoy the pleasure of thy presence, and feel the animating power of it, awakening my soul to an earnest desire to think and act as in thy sight.

Thus let my days be spent: and let them always be closed in thy fear and under a sense of thy gracious presence. Meet me, O Lord, in mine evening retirements. May I choose the most proper time for them; may I diligently attend to reading and prayer; and

when I review my conduct, may I do it with an impartial eye. Let not self-love spread a false coloring over it; but may I judge myself as one that expects to be judged of the Lord and is very solicitous he may be approved by thee, "who searchest all hearts, and canst not forget any of my works" (Amos 8:7). Let "my prayer come daily before thee as incense," and let "the lifting up of my hands be as the morning and the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). May I resign my powers to sleep in sweet calmness and serenity; conscious that I have lived to God in the day, and cheerfully persuaded that I am accepted of thee in Christ Jesus my Lord, and humbly hoping in thy mercy through him, whether my days on earth be prolonged, or "the residue of them be cut off in the midst" (Isa. 38:10). If death comes by a leisurely advance, may it find me thus employed; and if I am called on a sudden to exchange worlds, may my last days and hours be found to have been conducted by such maxims as these; that I may have a sweet and easy passage from the services of time to the infinitely nobler services of an immortal state. I ask it through him, who while on earth was the fairest pattern and example of every virtue and grace, and who now lives and reigns with thee, "able to save unto the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25); to

him, having done all, I would fly, with humble acknowledgment that I am "an unprofitable servant" (Luke 17:10); to him be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

The Young Convert's Prayer for Divine Protection Against the Danger of Snares

Blessed God! in the midst of ten thousand snares and dangers which surround me from without and from within, permit me to look up unto thee with my humble entreaty, that thou wouldst "deliver me from them that rise up against me" (Ps. 59:1), and that "thine eyes may be upon me for good" (Jer. 24:6). When sloth and indolence are ready to seize me, awaken me from that idle dream with lively and affectionate views of that invisible and eternal world to which I am tending. Remind me of what infinite importance it is that I diligently improve those transient moments which thou hast allotted me as the time of my preparation for it.

When sinners entice me, may I not consent (Prov. 1:10). May holy converse with God give me a disrelish for the converse of those who are strangers to thee, and who would separate my soul from thee! May "I honor them that fear the Lord" (Ps. 15:4); and

walking with such wise and holy men, may I find I am daily advancing in wisdom and holiness (Prov. 13). Quicken me, O Lord, by their means, that by me thou mayest also quicken others! Make me the happy instrument of enkindling and animating the flame of divine love in their breasts; and may it catch from heart to heart, and grow every moment in its progress.

Guard me, O Lord, from the love of sensual pleasure. May I seriously remember, that "to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8: 6). May it please thee, therefore, to purify and refine my soul by the influences of thy Holy Spirit, that I may always shun unlawful gratifications more solicitously than others pursue them; and that those indulgences of animal nature which thou hast allowed, and which the constitution of things renders necessary, may be soberly and moderately used. May I still remember the superior dignity of my spiritual and intelligent nature, and may the pleasures of the man and the Christian be sought as my noblest happiness. May my soul rise on the wings of holy contemplation to the regions of invisible glory, and may I be endeavoring to form myself, under the influences of divine grace, for the entertainments of those angelic spirits that live in thy presence in a happy incapacity of those gross

delights by which spirits dwelling in flesh are so often ensnared, and in which they so often lose the memory of their high original and of those noble hopes which alone are proportionable to it.

Give me, O Lord, to know the station in which thou hast fixt me, and steadily to pursue the duties of it. But deliver me from those excessive cares of this world, which would so engross my time and my thoughts that the one thing needful should be forgotten. May my desires after worldly possessions be moderated by considering their uncertain and unsatisfying nature, and while others are laying up treasures on earth, may I be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). May I never be too busy to attend to those great affairs which lie between thee and my soul, never be so engrossed with the concerns of time as to neglect the interests of eternity. May I pass through earth with my heart and hopes set upon heaven, and feel the attractive influence stronger and stronger as I approach still nearer and nearer to that desirable center; till the happy moment come, when every earthly object shall disappear from my view, and the shining glories of the heavenly world shall fill my improved and strengthened sight, which shall then be cheered with that which would now overwhelm me. AMEN.

A Prayer for One Under Spiritual Decays

Eternal and unchangeable Jehovah! thy perfections and glories are, like thy being, immutable; Jesus, thy Son, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). The eternal world to which I am hastening is always equally important, and presses upon the attentive mind for a more fixt and solemn regard, in proportion to the degree in which it comes nearer and nearer. But, alas! my views and my affections and my best resolutions are continually varying, like this poor body, which goes through daily and hourly alterations in its state and circumstances. Whence, O Lord, whence this sad change, which I now experience, in the frame and temper of my mind toward thee? Whence this alienation of my soul from thee? Why can I not come to thee with all the endearments of filial love as I once could? Why is thy service so remissly attended, if attended at all? and why are the exercises of it, which were once my greatest pleasure, become a burden to me? "Where, O God, is the blessedness I once spake of" (Gal. 4:15), when my joy in thee as my heavenly Father was so conspicuous that strangers might have ob-

served it; and when my heart did so overflow with love to thee and with zeal for thy service that it was matter of self-denial to me to limit and restrain the genuine expressions of those strong emotions of my soul, even where prudence and duty required it?

Alas, Lord, whither am I fallen! Thine eye sees me still; but O, how unlike what it once saw me! Cold and insensible as I am, I must blush on the reflection. Thou "seest me in secret" (Matt. 6:6), and seest me, perhaps, often amusing myself with trifles in those seasons which I used solemnly to devote to thine immediate service. Thou seest me coming into thy presence as by constraint; and when I am before thee, so straitened in my spirit that I hardly know what to say to thee, tho thou art the God with whom I have to do, and tho the keeping up an humble and dutiful correspondence with thee is beyond all comparison the most important business of my life. And even when I am speaking to thee, with how much coldness and formality is it! It is, perhaps, the work of the imagination, the labor of the lips; but where are those ardent desires, those intense breathings after God, which I once felt? Where is that pleasing repose in thee which I was once conscious of, as being near my divine rest, as being happy in that nearness, and resolving that

if possible I would no more be removed from it? But, O, how far am I now removed! When these short devotions, if they may be called devotions, are over, in what long intervals do I forget thee, and appear so little animated with thy love, so little devoted to thy service, that a stranger might converse with me a considerable time without knowing that I had ever formed any acquaintance with thee, without discovering that I had so much as known or heard any thing of God. Thou callest me to thine house, O Lord, on thine own day; but how heartless are my services there! I offer thee no more than a carcass. My thoughts and affections are engrossed with other objects, while I "draw near thee with my mouth, and honor thee with my lips" (Isa. 29:13). Thou callest me to thy table; but my heart is so frozen that it hardly melts even at the foot of the cross, hardly feels any efficacy in the blood of Jesus. O wretched creature that I am! Unworthy of being called thine! unworthy of a place among thy children, or of the meanest situation in thy family; rather worthy to be cast out, to be forsaken, yea, to be utterly destroyed!

Is this, Lord, the service which I once promised, and which thou hast so many thousand reasons to expect? Are these the returns I am making for thy daily providential care,

for the sacrifice of thy Son, for the communications of thy Spirit, for the pardon of my numberless aggravated sins, for the hopes, the undeserved and so often-forfeited hopes, of eternal glory? Lord, I am ashamed to stand or to kneel before thee. But pity me, I beseech thee, and help me; for I am a pitiable object indeed! "My soul cleaveth unto the dust," and lays itself as in the dust before thee; but O, "quicken me according to thy word" (Ps. 119:25). Let me trifle no longer, for I am upon the brink of a precipice. I am thinking of my ways; O give me grace to turn my feet unto thy testimonies; to make haste without any further delay, that I may keep thy commandments (Ps. 119:59, 60). "Search me, O Lord, and try me" (Ps. 139:23). Go to the first root of this distemper which spreads itself over my soul, and recover me from it. Represent sin unto me, O Lord, I beseech thee, that I may see it with abhorrence; and represent the Lord Jesus Christ to me in such a light that I may "look upon him and mourn" (Zech. 12:10), that I may look upon him and love. May I awake from this stupid lethargy into which I am sinking; and may Christ give me more abundant degrees of spiritual life and activity than I have ever yet received. And may I be so quickened and

animated by him that I may more than recover the ground I have lost, and may make a more speedy and exemplary progress than in my best days I have ever yet done. Send down upon me, O Lord, in a more rich and abundant effusion, thy good Spirit. May he dwell in me, as in a temple which he has consecrated to himself (1 Cor. 3:16); and while all the service is directed and governed by him, may holy and acceptable sacrifices be continually offered (Rom. 12:1). May the incense be constant, and may it be fragrant. May the sacred fire burn and blaze perpetually (Lev. 5:13); and may none of its vessels ever be profaned, by being employed to an unholy or forbidden use. AMEN.

A Humble Supplication for One Under the Hidings of God's Face

Blessed God! "with thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9) and of happiness. I adore thy name, that I have ever tasted of thy streams, that I have ever felt the peculiar pleasure arising from the light of thy countenance, and the shedding abroad of thy love in my soul. But, alas! these delightful seasons are now to me no more; and the "remembrance of them engages me to pour out my soul within me" (Ps. 42:4). I would come, as I have formerly

done, and call thee, with the same endearment, my Father and my God: but, alas! I know not how to do it. Guilt and fears arise, and forbid the delightful language. I seek thee, O Lord, but I seek thee in vain. I would pray, but my lips are sealed up. I would read thy word, but all the promises of it are veiled from mine eyes. I frequent those ordinances which have been formerly most nourishing and comfortable to my soul, but, alas! they are only the shadows of ordinances, the substance is gone, the animating spirit is fled, and leaves them now at best but the image of what I once knew them.

But, Lord, "hast thou cast off for ever, and wilt thou be favorable no more?" (Ps. 77:7). Hast thou in awful judgment determined that my soul must be left to a perpetual winter, the sad emblem of eternal darkness? Indeed, I deserve it should be so. I acknowledge, O Lord, I deserve to be cast away from thy presence with disdain; to be sunk lower than I am, much lower: I deserve to have the "shadow of death upon mine eyelids"(Job 16:16), and even to be surrounded with the thick gloom of the infernal prison. But hast thou not raised multitudes who have deserved, like me, "to be delivered unto chains of darkness" (2 Pet. 2:4), to the visions of thy glory above, where no cloud can ever interpose be-

tween thee and their rejoicing spirits? "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me" (Ps. 123:3); and tho mine iniquities have now justly "caused thee to hide thy face from me" (Isa. 69:2), yet be thou rather pleased, agreeably to the gracious language of thy word, to "hide thy face from my sins, and to blot out all mine iniquities" (Ps. 51:9). Cheer my heart with the tokens of thy returning favor, and "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Ps. 35:3).

Remember, O Lord God, remember that dreadful day in which Jesus thy dear Son endured what my sins have deserved! Remember that agony, in which he poured out his soul before thee, and said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Did he not, O Lord, endure all this, that humble penitents might through him be brought near unto thee, and might behold thee with pleasure, as their Father and their God? Thus do I desire to come unto thee, blessed Savior; art thou not appointed "to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:3). O wash away my tears, anoint my head with the oil of gladness, and clothe me with the garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10).

"O that I knew where I might find thee" (Job 23:3). O that I knew what it is that has engaged thee to depart from me! I am "searching and trying my ways" (Lam. 3:40). O that thou wouldst "search me, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and if there be any wicked way in me, discover it, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24), in that way in which I may find rest and peace for my soul (Jer. 6:16), and feel the discoveries of thy love in Christ!

O God, "who didst command the light to shine out of darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6), speak but the word, and light shall dart into my soul at once! "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise" (Ps. 51:15), shall burst out into a cheerful song, which shall display before those whom my present dejections may have discouraged, the pleasures and supports of religion!

Yet, Lord, on the whole, I submit to thy will. If it is thus that my faith must be exercised, by walking in darkness for days and months and years to come, how long soever they may seem, how long soever they may be, I will submit. Still will I adore thee as "the God of Israel and the Savior, though thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Isa. 14:15); still will I "trust in the name of the Lord, and

stay myself upon my God" (Isa. 50:10), "trusting in thee, though thou slay me" (Job 13:15), and "waiting for thee more than they that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning" (Ps. 130:6). Peradventure "in the evening time it may be light" (Zech. 14:7). I know that thou hast sometimes manifested thy compassions to thy dying servants, and given them, in the lowest ebb of their natural spirits, a full tide of divine glory, thus turning "darkness into light before them" (Isa. 42:16). So may it please thee to gild the valley of the shadow of death with the light of thy presence, when I am passing through it, and to stretch forth "thy rod and thy staff to comfort me" (Ps. 23:4), that my tremblings may cease, and the gloom may echo with songs of praise! But if it be thy sovereign pleasure that distress and darkness should still continue to the last motion of my pulse, and the last gasp of my breath, O let it cease with the parting struggle, and bring me to that "light which is sown for the righteous, and to that gladness which is reserved for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11), to the unclouded regions of everlasting splendor and joy, where the full anointings of the Spirit shall be poured out on all thy people, and thou wilt no more "hide thy face from any of them" (Ezek. 39:29).

This, "Lord, is thy salvation, for which I am waiting" (Gen. 49:18), and whilst I feel the desires of my soul drawn out after it, I will never despair of obtaining it. Continue and increase those desires, and at length satisfy and exceed them all, "through the riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus." AMEN.

An Humble Address to God Under the Pressure of Heavy Affliction

O thou supreme yet all-righteous and gracious Governor of the whole universe! Mean and inconsiderable as this little province of thy spacious empire may appear, thou dost not disregard the earth and its inhabitants, but attendest to its concerns with the most condescending and gracious regard. "Thou reignest, and I rejoice in it," as it is indeed matter of universal joy (Ps. 97:1). I believe thy universal providence and care; and I firmly believe thy wise, holy, and kind interposition in every thing which relates to me and to the circumstances of my abode in this thy world. I would look through all inferior causes unto thee, whose eyes are upon all thy creatures; to thee "who formest the light and createst darkness, who makest peace and createst evil" (Isa. 45:7), to thee, Lord, who, at thy pleasure, canst exchange the one for the

other, canst turn the brightest noon into midnight, and the darkest midnight into noon.

O thou wise and merciful Governor of the world! I have often said "Thy will be done": and now thy will is painful to me. But shall I, upon that account, unsay what I have so often said? God forbid. I come rather to lay myself down at thy feet, and to declare my full and free submission to all thy sacred pleasure. O Lord, thou art just and righteous in all! I acknowledge, in thy venerable and awful presence, that I have deserved this and ten thousand times more (Ezra 9:13). I acknowledge, that "it is of thy mercy that I am not utterly consumed" (Lam. 3:22), and that any the least degree of comfort yet remains. O Lord, I most readily confess that the sins of one day of my life have merited all these chastisements, and that every day of my life hath been more or less sinful. Smite, therefore, O thou righteous Judge! and I will still adore thee, that instead of the scourge thou hast not given a commission to the sword to do all the dreadful work of justice, and to pour out my blood in thy presence.

But shall I speak unto thee only as my Judge? O Lord, thou hast taught me a tender name: thou condescendest to call thyself my Father, and to speak of correction as the effect of thy love. O welcome, welcome, those afflic-

tions which are the tokens of thy paternal affection, the marks of my adoption into thy family! Thou knowest what discipline I need; thou seest, O Lord, that bundle of folly which there is in the heart of thy poor, froward, and thoughtless child, and knowest what rods and what strokes are needful to drive it away. I would therefore "be in humble subjection to the Father of spirits," who "chasteneth me for my profit"; would be in subjection to him, and live (Heb. 12:9, 10). I would bear thy strokes, not merely because I can not resist them, but because I love and trust in thee. I would sweetly acquiesce and rest in thy will, as well as stoop to it; and would say, "Good is the word of the Lord" (2 Kings 20:19). And I desire, that not only my lips but my soul may acquiesce. Yea, Lord, I would praise thee, that thou wilt show so much regard to me as to apply such remedies as these to the diseases of my mind, and art thus kindly careful to train me up for glory. I have no objection against being afflicted, against being afflicted in this particular way; "The cup which my Father puts into mine hand, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). By thine assistance and support I will. Only be pleased, O Lord, to stand by me, and sometimes to grant me a favorable look in the midst of my sufferings. Support

my soul, I beseech thee, by thy consolations mingled with my tribulations, and I shall glory in those tribulations that are thus allayed. It has been the experience of many who have reflected on afflicted days with pleasure, and have acknowledged that their comforts have swallowed up their sorrows. And after all that thou hast done, "are thy mercies restrained?" (Isa. 63:15). "Is thy hand waxed short?" (Num. 11:23), or canst thou not still do the same for me?

If my heart be less tender, less sensible, thou canst cure that disorder, and canst make this affliction the means of curing it. Thus let it be; and at length, in thine own due time, and in the way which thou shalt choose, work out deliverance for me; and "show me thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee" (Ps. 17:7). For I well know that how dark soever this night of affliction seems, if thou sayest, "Let there be light, there shall be light." But I would urge nothing before the time thy wisdom and goodness shall appoint. I am much more concerned that my afflictions may be sanctified than that they may be removed. Number me, O God, among the "happy persons whom," whilst "thou chastenest," thou "teachest out of thy law" (Ps. 94:12). Show me, I beseech thee, "where-

fore thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2), and purify me by the fire, which is so painful to me while I am passing through it! Dost thou not "chasten thy children" for this very end, "that they may be partakers of thy holiness" (Heb. 12:10). Thou knowest, O God, it is this my soul is breathing after. I am partaker of thy bounty every day and moment of my life; I am partaker of thy gospel, and, I hope, in some measure too, a partaker of the grace of it operating on my heart. O may it operate more and more, that I may largely partake of thine holiness, too; that I may come nearer and nearer in the temper of my mind to thee, O blessed God, the supreme model of perfection. Let my soul be, as it were, melted, tho with the intensest heat of the furnace, if I may but thereby be made fit for being delivered into the mold of the gospel, and bearing thy bright and amiable image!

O Lord "my soul longeth for thee; it crieth out for the living God" (Ps. 84:2). In thy presence, and under the support of thy love, I can bear any thing; and am willing to bear it, if I may grow more lovely in thine eyes and more meet for thy kingdom. The days of my affliction will have an end; the hour will at length come when "thou wilt wipe away all my tears" (Rev. 21:4). Tho it

tarry, I would "wait for it" (Heb. 2:3). My foolish heart, in the midst of all its trials, is ready to grow fond of this earth, disappointing and grievous as it is: and graciously, O God, dost thou deal with me in breaking those bonds that would tie me faster to it. O let my soul be girding itself up, and, as it were, stretching its wings, in expectation of that blessed hour, when it shall drop all its sorrows and incumbrances at once, and soar away to expatiate with infinite delight in the regions of liberty, peace, and joy! AMEN.

The Advanced Christian Reminded of the Mercies of God, and Exhorted to the Exercise of Habitual Love to Him, and Joy In Him

I would suppose my reader to find, on an examination of his spiritual state, that he is growing in grace. And if you desire that this growth may at once be acknowledged and promoted, let me call your soul to that more affectionate exercise of love to God and joy in him which suits, and strengthens, and exalts the character of the advanced Christian; which I beseech you to regard not only as your privilege but as your duty, too. Love is the most sublime generous principle of all true and acceptable obedience; and with love,

when so wisely and happily fixt, when so certainly returned, joy, proportionable joy, must naturally be connected. It may justly grieve a man that enters into the spirit of Christianity to see how low a life the generality even of sincere Christians commonly live in this respect. "Rejoice then in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (Ps. 97:12), and of all those other perfections and glories which are included in that majestic, that wonderful, that delightful name, the Lord thy God! Spend not your sacred moments merely in confession or petition, tho each must have their daily share: but give a part, a considerable part, to the celestial and angelic work of praise. Yea, labor to carry about with you continually a heart overflowing with such sentiments, warmed and inflamed with such affections.

Are there not continually rays enough diffused from the great Father of light and love to enkindle it in our bosom? Come, my Christian friend and brother, come and survey with me the goodness of our heavenly Father. And O! that he would give me such a sense of it that I might represent it in a suitable manner; that "while I am musing the fire may burn" in my own heart (Ps. 39:3), and be communicated to yours! and O! that it might pass with the lines I write, from soul to soul,

awakening in the breast of every Christian that reads them sentiments more worthy of the children of God and the heirs of glory, who are to spend an eternity in those sacred exercises to which I am now endeavoring to excite you!

Have you not reason to adopt the words of David, and say, "How many are thy gracious thoughts unto me, O Lord! how great is the sum of them! When I would count them, they are more in number than the sand" (Ps. 139:17, 18). You indeed know where to begin the survey; for the favors of God to you began with your being. Commemorate it, therefore, with a grateful heart, that the "eyes which saw your substance, being yet imperfect," beheld you with a friendly care "when you were made in secret," and have watched over you ever since; and that the hand, which drew the plan of your members, when as yet there was none of them (Ps. 139: 15, 16), not only fashioned them at first, but from that time has been concerned in keeping all your bones, so that not "one of them is broken" (Ps. 34:20), and that indeed it is to this you owe it that you live. Look back upon the path you have trod from the day that God brought you out of the womb, and say whether you do not, as it were, see all the road thick set with the marks and

memorials of the divine goodness. Recollect the places where you have lived and the persons with whom you have most intimately conversed, and call to mind the mercies you have received in those places and from those persons as the instruments of the divine care and goodness. Recollect the difficulties and dangers with which you have been surrounded; and reflect attentively on what God has done to defend you from them, or to carry you through them. Think how often there has been "but a step between you and death"; and how suddenly God has sometimes interposed to set you in safety, even before you apprehended your danger. Think of those chambers of illness in which you have been confined, and from whence perhaps you once thought you should go forth no more; but said, with Hezekiah "In the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years" (Isa. 38:10). God has, it may be, since that time, added many years to your life; and you know not how many may be in reserve, or how much usefulness and happiness may attend each. Survey your circumstances in relative life; how many kind friends are surrounding you daily, and studying how they may contribute to your comfort. Reflect on those remarkable circumstances in providence

which occasioned the knitting of some bonds of this kind, which, next to those which join your soul to God, you number among the happiest. And forget not, in how many instances, when these dear lives have been threatened, lives perhaps more sensibly dear than your own, God has given them back from the borders of the grave, and so added new endearments arising from that tender circumstance to all your after converse with them. Nor forget in how gracious a manner he has supported some others in their last moments, and enabled them to leave behind a sweet odor of piety, which has embalmed their memories, revived you when ready to faint under the sorrows of the last separation, and, on the whole, made even the recollection of their death delightful.

But it is more than time that I lead on your thoughts to the many spiritual mercies which God has bestowed upon you. Look back, as it were, to the "rock from whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence you were digged" (Isa. 51:1). Reflect seriously on the state wherein divine grace found you—under how much guilt, under how much pollution, in what danger, in what ruin! Think what was, and, O! think with yet deeper reflection, what would have been the case! The eye of God, which pene-

trates into eternity, saw that your mind, amused with the trifles of present time and sensual gratification, was utterly ignorant and regardless of it; it saw you on the borders of eternity, and pitied you; saw that you would in a little time have been such a helpless wretched creature as the sinner that is just now dead, and has, to his infinite surprize and everlasting terror, met his unexpected doom, and would, like him, stand thunderstruck in astonishment and despair. This God saw, and he pitied you; and being merciful to you, he provided in the counsels of his eternal love and grace a Redeemer for you, and purchased you to himself with the blood of his Son; a price which, if you will pause upon it and think seriously what it was, must surely affect you to such a degree as to make you fall down before God in wonder and shame to think it should ever have been given for you. To accomplish these blessed purposes, he sent his grace into your heart; so that, tho "you were once darkness, you are now light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). He made that happy change which you now feel in your soul, and by his Holy Spirit which is given to you, he shed abroad that principle of love (Rom. 5:5), which is enkindled by this review, and now flames with greater ardor than before. Thus far he has

supported you in your Christian course; and, "having obtained help from him, it is that you continue even to this day" (Acts 26:22). He has not only blessed you, but made you a blessing (Gen. 12:2), and tho you have not been so useful as that holy generosity of heart, which he has excited, would have engaged you to desire, yet some good you have done in the station in which he has fixt you. Some of your brethren of mankind have been relieved, perhaps, too, some thoughtless creature reclaimed to virtue and happiness, by his blessing on your endeavors. Some in the way to heaven are praising God for you; and some, perhaps, already there are longing for your arrival, that they may thank you in nobler and more expressive forms for benefits, the importance of which they now sufficiently understand, tho while here they could never conceive it.

Christian, look around on the numberless blessings of one kind and of another with which you are already encompassed, and advance your prospect still further to what faith yet discovers within the veil. Think of those now unknown transports with which thou shalt drop every burden in the grave, and thine immortal spirit shall mount, light and joyful, holy and happy, to God, its original, its support, and its hope; to God,

the source of being, of holiness, and of pleasure; to Jesus, through whom all these mercies are derived to thee, and who will appoint thee a throne near his own, to be for ever the spectator and partaker of his glory. Think of the rapture with which thou shalt attend his triumph in the resurrection day, and receive this poor moldering corruptible body, transformed into his glorious image, and then think: "these hopes are not mine alone, but the hopes of thousands and millions. Multitudes whom I number among the dearest of my friends upon earth, are rejoicing with me in these apprehensions and views; and God gives me sometimes to see the smiles on their cheeks, the sweet humble hope that sparkles in their eyes, and shines through the tears of tender gratitude; and to hear that little of their inward complacency and joy which language can express. Yes, and multitudes more, who were once equally dear to me with thee, tho I have laid them in the grave and wept over their dust, are living to God, living in the possession of inconceivable delights, and drinking large drafts of the water of life, which flows in perpetual streams at his right hand."

O Christian, thou art still intimately united and allied to them. Death can not break a friendship thus cemented; and it ought not

to render thee insensible of the happiness of those friends for whose memory thou retainest so just an honor. They live to God, as his servants; they "serve him, and see his face" (Rev. 22:3, 4), and they make but a small part of that glorious assembly. Millions equally worthy of thine esteem and affections with themselves inhabit those blissful regions: and wilt thou not rejoice in their joy? wilt thou not adore that everlasting spring of holiness and happiness from whence each of these streams is derived? Yea, I will add, while the blessed angels are so kindly regarding us, while they are administering to thee, O Christian, and bearing thee in their arms "as an heir of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), wilt thou not rejoice in their felicity too? and wilt thou not adore that God, who gives them all the superior glory of their more exalted nature, and gives them a heaven which fills them with blessedness, even while they seem to withdraw from it that they may attend on thee?

This, and infinitely more than this, the blessed God is, and was, and shall ever be. The felicities of the blessed spirits that surround his throne, and thy felicities, O Christian, are immortal. These heavenly luminaries shall glow with an undecaying flame; and thou shalt shine and glitter among them when the sun and stars are gone out. Still

shall the unchanging Father of lights pour forth his beams upon them; and the luster they reflect from him and their happiness in him shall be everlasting, shall be ever growing. Bow down, O thou child of God, thou heir of glory, bow down, and let all that is around thee, and all that is before thee in the prospects of an unbounded eternity, concur to elevate and transport thy soul that thou mayest, as far as possible, begin the work and blessedness of heaven, in falling down before the God of it, in opening thine heart to his gracious influences, and in breathing out before him that incense of praise which these warm beams of his presence and love have so great a tendency to produce, and to ennoble with a fragrancy resembling that of his paradise above.

The Grateful Soul Rejoicing In the Blessings of Providence and Grace, and Pouring Out Itself Before God In Vigorous and Affectionate Exercises of Love and Praise

O my God, it is enough! I have mused, and "the fire burneth" (Ps. 39:3). But, O! in what language shall the flame break forth! What can I say but this, that my heart ad-

mires thee, and adores thee, and loves thee! My little vessel is as full as it can hold; and I would pour out all that fulness before thee, that it may grow capable of receiving more and more. Thou art "my hope, and my help; my glory and the lifter up of my head" (Ps. 3:3). "My heart rejoiceth in thy salvation" (Ps. 13), and when I set myself under the influences of thy good Spirit to converse with thee, a thousand delightful thoughts spring up at once; a thousand sources of pleasure are unsealed, and flow in upon my soul with such refreshment and joy that they seem to crowd into every moment the happiness of days, and weeks, and months.

I bless thee, O God, for this soul of mine, which thou hast created; which thou hast taught to say, and I hope to the happiest purpose, "Where is God my maker?" (Job 35:10). I bless thee for the knowledge with which thou hast adorned it. I bless thee for that grace with which, I trust, I may (not without humble wonder) say, Thou hast sanctified it; tho, alas! the celestial plant is fixt in too barren a soil, and does not flourish to the degree I could wish.

I bless thee also for that body which thou hast given me, which thou preservest as yet in its strength and vigor; not only capable

of relishing the entertainments which thou providest for its various senses, but (which I esteem far more valuable than any of them for its own sake) capable of acting with some vivacity in thy service. I bless thee for that ease and freedom with which these limbs of mine move themselves and obey the dictates of my spirit, I hope as guided by thine. I bless thee that "the keepers of the house do not yet tremble, nor the strong men bow themselves; that they that look out of the windows are not yet darkened, nor the daughters of music brought low." I bless thee, O God of my life, that "the silver cord is not yet loosed, nor the golden bowl broken" (Eccles. 12:3, 4, 6). For it is thine hand that braces all my nerves, and thine infinite skill that prepares those spirits which flow in so freely, and, when exhausted, recruit so soon and so plentifully.

I praise thee for that royal bounty which thou providest for the daily support of mankind in general, and for mine in particular; for the various tables which thou spreadest before me, and for the overflowing cup which thou puttest into mine hands (Ps. 23:5). I bless thee, that these bounties of thy providence do not serve, as it were, to upbraid a disabled appetite, and are not like messes of meat set before the dead. I bless thee too, that

"I eat not my morsel alone" (Job 31:17), but share it with so many agreeable friends, who add the relish of a social life to that of the animal at our seasons of common repast. I thank thee for so many dear relatives at home, for so many kind friends abroad, who are capable of serving me in various instances, and disposed to make an obliging use of that capacity.

Nor would I forget to acknowledge thy favor in rendering me capable of serving others, and giving me in any instances to know how much more "blessed it is to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). I thank thee for a heart which feels the sorrows of the necessitous, and a mind which can make it my early care and refreshment to contrive, according to my little ability, for their relief; for "this also cometh forth from thee, O Lord" (Isa. 28:9), the great author of every benevolent inclination, of every prudent scheme, of every successful attempt to spread happiness around us, or in any instance to lessen distress.

And, surely, O Lord, if I thus acknowledge the pleasures of sympathy with the afflicted, much more must I bless thee for those of sympathy with the happy, with those that are completely blessed. I adore thee for the streams that water paradise, and maintain it

in ever-flourishing, ever-growing delight. I praise thee for the rest, the joy, the transport, thou art giving to many that were once dear to me on earth; whose sorrows it was my labor to soothe, and whose joys, especially in thee, it was the delight of my heart to promote. I praise thee for the blessedness of every saint and of every angel that surround thy throne above; and I praise thee with accents of distinguished pleasure for that reviving hope which thou hast implanted in my bosom, that I shall ere long know, by clear sight and by everlasting experience, what that felicity of theirs is, which I now only discover at a distance through the comparatively obscure glass of faith. Even now, I am "waiting for thy salvation" (Gen. 49:18), with that ardent desire on the one hand which its sublime greatness can not but inspire into the believing soul, and that calm resignation on the other, which the immutability of thy promise establishes.

And now, O my God, what shall I say unto thee. What, but that I love thee above all the powers of language to express! That I love thee for what thou art to thy creatures, who are in their various forms, every moment deriving being, knowledge, and happiness from thee, in numbers and degrees far beyond what my narrow imagination can conceive. But,

O, I adore and love thee yet far more for what thou art in thyself, for those stores of perfection which creation has not diminished, and which never can be exhausted by all the effects of it which thou impartest to thy creatures; that infinite perfection which makes thee thine own happiness, thine own end; amiable, infinitely amiable and venerable, were all derived excellency and happiness forgot.

O thou first, thou greatest, thou fairest of all objects! thou only great, thou only fair, possess all my soul! and surely thou dost possess it. While I thus feel thy sacred Spirit breathing on my heart and exciting these fervors of love to thee, I can not doubt it any more than I can doubt the reality of this animal life, while I exert the actings of it and feel its sensations. Surely if ever I knew the appetite of hunger, my soul hungers after righteousness (Matt. 5:6), and longs for a greater conformity to thy blessed nature, and holy will. If ever my palate felt thirst, "my soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God" (Ps. 42:2), and panteth for the more abundant communication of his favor. If ever this body, when wearied with labors or journeys, knew what it was to wish for the refreshment of my bed and rejoiced to rest there, my soul, with sweet acquiescence, rests

upon thy gracious bosom, O my heavenly Father, and returns to its repose in the embraces of its God, who hath dealt so bountifully with it (Ps. 116:7). And if ever I saw the face of a beloved friend with complacency and joy, I rejoice in beholding thy face, O Lord, and in calling thee my Father in Christ. Such thou art, and such thou wilt be, for time and for eternity. What have I more to do but to commit myself to thee for both? leaving it to thee to choose mine inheritance, and to order my affairs for me (Ps. 47:4), while all my business is to serve thee, and all my delight to praise thee. "My soul follows hard after God, because his right hand upholds me" (Ps. 63:8). Let it still bear me up, and I shall press on toward thee, till all my desires be accomplished in the eternal enjoyment of thee. AMEN.

The Established Christian Breathing After More Extensive Usefulness

O bountiful Father and sovereign Author of all good, whether natural or spiritual! I bless thee for the various talents with which thou hast enriched so undeserving a creature as I must acknowledge myself to be. My soul is in the deepest confusion before thee when I consider to how little purpose I have hither-

to improved them. Alas! what have I done, in proportion to what thou mightest have reasonably expected, with the gifts of nature which thou hast bestowed upon me, with my capacities of life, with my time, with my talents, with my possessions, with my influence over others. Alas! through my own negligence and folly I look back on a barren wilderness, where I might have seen a fruitful field and a springing harvest. Justly do I indeed deserve to be stript of all, to be brought to an immediate account for all, to be condemned as in many respects unfaithful to thee, and to the world, and to my own soul, and in consequence of that condemnation to be cast into the prison of eternal darkness. But thou, Lord, hast freely forgiven the dreadful debt of ten thousand talents. Adored be thy name for it. Accept, O Lord, accept that renewed surrender which I would now make of myself and of all I have unto thy service. I acknowledge that it is "of thine own that I give thee" (1 Chron. 29:14); make me, I beseech thee, a faithful steward for my great Lord; and may I think of no separate interest of my own in opposition to thine.

I adore thee, O thou God of all grace, if while I am thus speaking to thee I feel the love of thy creatures arising in my soul; if I feel my heart opening to embrace my breth-

ren of mankind. O make me thy faithful almoner, in distributing to them all that thou hast lodged in mine hand for their relief. And in determining what is my own share, may I hold the balance with an equal hand, and judge impartially between myself and them. The proportion thou allowest may I thankfully take for myself and those who are immediately mine. The rest may I distribute with wisdom and fidelity and cheerfulness. Guide my hand, O ever-merciful Father, while thou dost me the honor to make me thine instrument in dealing out a few of thy bounties, that I may bestow them where they are most needed and where they will answer the best end. And if it be thy gracious will, do thou "multiply the seed sown" (2 Cor. 9:10); prosper me in my worldly affairs that I may have more to impart to them that need it; and thus lead me on to the region of everlasting plenty, and everlasting benevolence. There may I meet with many to whom I have been an affectionate benefactor on earth; and if it be thy blessed will, with many whom I have also been the means of conducting into the path to that blissful abode. There may they entertain me in their habitations of glory. And, in time and eternity, do thou, Lord, accept the praise of all, through Jesus Christ, at whose feet I would bow; and

at whose feet, after the most useful course, I would at last die, with as much humility as if I were then exerting the first act of faith upon him, and had never had an opportunity, by one tribute of obedience and gratitude in the services of life, to approve its sincerity.

The Meditation and Prayer of a Christian Whose Heart Is Warmed With Prospects of Heaven

O blessed Lord! my soul is enkindled with these views (of heaven), and rises to thee in the flame (Judges 13:20). Thou hast testified thou comest quickly; and I repeat my joyful assent. "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Come, for I long to have done with this low life; to have done with its burdens, its sorrows, and its snares! Come, for I long to ascend into thy presence, and to see the court thou art holding above!

Blessed Jesus, death is transformed when I view it in this light. The king of terrors is seen no more as such, so near is the King of glory and of grace. I hear with pleasure the sound of thy feet approaching still nearer and nearer; draw aside the veil whenever thou pleasest! Open the bars of my prison, that my eager soul may spring forth to thee and

cast itself at thy feet; at the feet of that Jesus "whom having not seen, I love; and in whom, though now I see thee not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8). "Thou, Lord, shalt show me the path of life"; thine hand shall guide me to thy blissful abode, where there is fulness of joy, and rivers of everlasting pleasure" (Ps. 16:11). Thou shalt assign me a habitation with thy faithful servants, whose separate spirits are now living with thee while their bodies sleep in the dust. Many of them have been my companions in thy laborious work, and "in the patience and tribulation of thy kingdom" (Rev. 1:9), my dear companions and my brethren. O show me, blessed Savior, how glorious and how happy thou hast made them! Show me to what new forms of better life thou hast conducted them whom we call the dead; in what nobler and more extensive services thou hast employed them, that I may praise thee better than I now can, for thy goodness to them. And O! give me to share with them in their blessings and their services, and to raise a song of grateful love, like that which they are breathing forth before thee!

Yet, O my blessed Redeemer, even there will my soul be aspiring to a yet nobler and more glorious hope, and from this as yet unknown

splendor and felicity shall I be drawing new arguments to look and long for the day of thy final appearance. There shall I long more ardently than I now do to see thy conduct vindicated and thy triumph displayed; to see the dust of thy servants reanimated, and death, the last of their enemies and of thine, swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:26, 54). I shall long for that superior honor that thou intendest me, and that complete bliss to which the whole body of thy people shall be conducted. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," will mingle itself with the songs of Paradise, and sound from the tongues of all the millions of thy saints, whom thy grace has transplanted thither.

In the meantime, O my divine Master, accept the homage which a grateful heart now pays thee, in a sense of the glorious hopes with which thou hast inspired it! It is thou that hast put this joy into it and hast raised my soul to this glorious ambition, whereas I might otherwise have now been groveling in the lowest trifles of time and sense, and been looking with horror on that hour which is now the object of my most ardent wishes.

O be with me always, even to the end of this mortal life; and give me, while waiting for thy salvation, to be doing thy commandments. May "my loins be girded about, and

my lamp burning" (Luke 12:35), and mine ears be still watchful for the blessed signal of thine arrival; that my glowing soul may with pleasure spring to meet thee, and be strengthened by death to bear those visions of glory, under the ecstasies of which feeble mortality would now expire!

Meditation or Prayer, Suited to the Case of a Dying Christian

O thou supreme Ruler of the visible and invisible worlds! thou Sovereign of life and of death, of earth and of heaven! Blessed be thy name, I have often been taught to seek thee. And now once more do I pour out my soul, my departing soul, unto thee. Bow down thy gracious ear, O God, and let my cry come before thee with acceptance!

The hour is come when thou wilt separate me from this world, with which I have been so long and so familiarly acquainted, and lead me to another as yet unknown. Enable me, I beseech thee, to make the exchange as becomes a child of Abraham, who being "called of thee to receive an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, though he knew not particularly whither he went" (Heb. 11:8), as becomes a child of God, who knows that through sovereign grace "it is his Father's good plea-

sure to give him the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

I acknowledge, O Lord, the justice of that sentence by which I am expiring; and own thy wisdom and goodness in appointing my journey through this gloomy vale which is now before me. Help me to turn it into the happy occasion of honoring thee and adorning my profession! and I will bless the pangs by which thou art glorified, and this mortal and sinful part of my nature dissolved.

Gracious Father, I would not quit this earth of thine, and this house of clay in which I have sojourned during my abode upon the face of it, without my grateful acknowledgments to thee, for all that abundant goodness which thou hast caused to pass before me here (Ex. 33:19). With my dying breath I bear witness to thy faithful care. I have wanted no good thing (Ps. 34:10). I thank thee, O my God, that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life was so long spared; that it has been still maintained by such a rich variety of thy bounty. I thank thee that thou hast made this beginning of my existence so pleasant to me. I thank thee for the mercies of my days and nights, of my months and years, which are now come to their period: I thank thee for the mercies of my infancy, and for those of my riper age; for all the agreeable friends which thou hast given me in this house of

my pilgrimage, the living and the dead; for all the help I have received from others, and for all the opportunities which thou hast given me of being helpful to the bodies or souls of my brethren of mankind. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life (Ps. 23:6), and I have reason to rise a thankful guest from the various and pleasant entertainments with which my table has been furnished by thee. Nor shall I have reason to repine or to grieve at quitting them, for O my God, are thy bounties exhausted? I know that they are not. I will not wrong thy goodness and thy faithfulness so much as to imagine that because I am going from this earth I am going from happiness. I adore thy mercy that thou hast taught me to entertain nobler views through Jesus thy Son. I bless thee with all the powers of my nature that I ever heard of his name and of his death; and would fain exert a more vigorous act of thankful adoration than in this broken state I am capable of, while I am extolling thee for the riches of thy grace manifested in him; for his instructions and his example, for his blood and his righteousness, and for that blessed Spirit of thine which thou hast given me to turn my sinful heart unto thyself and to bring me into the bonds of thy covenant; of that covenant, which is "ordered in all

things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5), and which this death, tho now separating my soul from my body, shall never be able to dissolve.

I bless thee, O Lord, that I am not dying in an unregenerate and impenitent state; but that thou didst graciously awaken and convince me; that thou didst renew and sanctify my heart, and didst by thy good Spirit work in it an unfeigned faith, and real repentance, and the beginning of a divine life. I thank thee for ministers and gospel ordinances; I thank thee for my sabbaths and my sacrament-days; for the weekly and monthly refreshments which they gave me. I thank thee for the fruits of Canaan which were sent me in the wilderness, and are now sent me on the brink of Jordan. I thank thee for thy blessed word, and for those exceeding rich and precious promises of it, which now lie as a cordial warm at my heart in this chilling hour; promises of support in death, and of glory beyond it, and of the resurrection of my body to everlasting life. O my God, I firmly believe them all, great and wonderful as they are, and am "waiting for the accomplishment of them through Jesus Christ; in whom they are all yea and amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). "Remember thy word unto thy servant on which thou hast caused me to hope" (Ps. 119:49). I covenanted with thee not

for worldly enjoyments, which thy love taught me comparatively to despise; but for eternal life, as the gift of thy free grace through "Jesus Christ my Lord" (Rom. 6:23); and now permit me, in his name, to enter my humble claim to it! Permit me to consign this departing spirit into thine hand; for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth (Ps. 31:5). "I am thine, save me" (Ps. 119:94), and make me happy!

But may I indeed presume to say, I am thine? O God, now I am standing on the borders of both worlds; now I view things as in the light of thy presence and of eternity; how unworthy do I appear, that I should be taken to dwell with thy angels and saints in glory! Alas, I have reason to look back with deep humiliation on a poor unprofitable, sinful life, in which I have daily been deserving to be cast into hell. But I have this one comfortable reflection, that I have fled to the cross of Christ; and I now renew my application to it. To think of appearing before God in such an imperfect righteousness as my own were ten thousand times worse than death. No, Lord, I come unto thee as a sinner, but as a sinner who hath believed in thy Son for pardon and life; I fall down before thee as a guilty polluted wretch; but thou hast made him to be unto thy people for wis-

dom and righteousness, for sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Let me have my lot among the followers of Jesus! Treat me as thou treatest those who are his friends and his brethren! for thou knowest my soul has loved him and trusted in him, and solemnly ventured itself on the security of his gospel. And "I know in whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12). The infernal lion may attempt to dismay me in this awful passage: but I rejoice that I am in the hands of the good Shepherd (John 10:11, 28), and I defy all my spiritual enemies, in a cheerful dependence on his faithful care. I lift up my eyes and my heart to him who "was dead and is alive again, and behold he lives for evermore, and hath the keys of death, and of the unseen world" (Rev. 1:18). Blessed Jesus, I die by thine hand, and I fear no harm from the hand of a Savior! I fear not that death which is allotted to me by the hand of my dearest Lord, who himself died to make it safe and happy. I come, Lord, I come, not only with a willing but with a joyful consent. I thank thee that thou rememberest me for good; that thou art breaking my chains, and calling me to "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). I thank thee, that thou wilt no longer permit me to live at a distance from thine arms; but after this

long absence, wilt have me at home, at home for ever.

My feeble nature faints in the view of that glory, which is now dawning upon me; but thou knowest gracious Lord, how to let it in upon my soul by just degrees, and to "make thy strength perfect in my weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Once more, for the last time, would I look down on this poor world, which I am going to quit, and breathe out my dying prayer for its prosperity, and that of thy Church in it. I have loved it, O Lord, as a living member of the body; and I love it to the last. I humbly beseech thee, therefore, that thou wilt guard it, and purify it, and unite it more and more! Send down more of thy blessed Spirit upon it, even the Spirit of wisdom, of holiness, and of love; till in due time "the wilderness be turned into a garden of the Lord" (Isa. 51:3), and "all flesh shall see thy salvation!" (Luke 3:6).

And as for me, bear me, O my heavenly Father, on the wings of everlasting love, to that peaceful, that holy, that joyous abode, which thy mercy has prepared for me, and which the blood of my Redeemer has purchased! Bear me "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22, 23).

And whatever this flesh may suffer, let my steady soul be delightfully fixt on that glory to which it is rising! Let faith perform its last office in an honorable manner! Let my few remaining moments on earth be spent for thy glory; and so let me ascend with love in my heart and praise on my faltering tongue, to the world where love and praise shall be complete! Be this my last song on earth—which I am going to tune in heaven: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). AMEN.

A Prayer for One Who Has Fallen Into Gross Sin, After Religious Resolutions and Engagements

O most holy, holy, holy, Lord God! when I seriously reflect on thy spotless purity, and on the strict and impartial methods of thy steady administration, together with that almighty power of thine which is able to carry every thought of thine heart into immediate and full execution, I may justly appear before thee this day with shame and terror, in confusion and consternation of spirit. This day, O my God, this dark mournful day, would I take occasion to look back to that sad

source of our guilt and our misery, the apostasy of our common parents, and say, with thine offending servant David, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). This day would I lament all the fatal consequences of such a descent with regard to myself. And, O, how many have they been! The remembrance of the sins of my unconverted state and the failings and infirmities of my after life may justly confound me. How much more such a scene as now lies before my conscience, and before thine all-seeing eye! For "thou, O Lord, knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee" (Ps. 69:5). "Thou tellest all my wanderings from thy statutes" (Ps. 56:8); thou seest, and thou recordest, every instance of my disobedience to thee and of my rebellion against thee; thou seest it in every aggravated circumstance which I can discern, and in many more which I have never observed or reflected upon. How then shall I "appear in thy presence, or lift up my face to thee" (Ezra 9:6). "I am full of confusion" (Job 10:15), and feel a secret regret in the thought of applying to thee; but, "O Lord, to whom should I go but unto thee?" (John 6:68); unto thee, on whom depends my life or my death; unto thee, who alone canst take away that burden of guilt

which now presses me down to the dust, who alone canst restore to my soul that rest and peace which I have lost, and which I deserve for ever to lose.

Behold me, O Lord God, falling down at thy feet. Behold me, pleading guilty in thy presence, and surrendering myself to that justice which I can not escape. I have not one word to offer in my own vindication, in my own excuse. Words, far from being able to clear up my innocence, can never sufficiently describe the enormity and demerit of my sin. Thou, O Lord, and thou only, knowest to the full how heinous and how aggravated it is. Thine infinite understanding alone can fathom the infinite depth of its malignity. I am, on many accounts, most unable to do it. I can not conceive the glory of thy sacred majesty, whose authority I have despised, nor the number and variety of those mercies which I have sinned against. I can not conceive the value of the blood of thy dear Son, which I have ungratefully trampled under my feet; nor the dignity of that blessed Spirit of thine, whose agency I have as far as I could been endeavoring to oppose, and whose work I have been as with all my might laboring to undo, and to tear up, as it were, that plantation of his grace, which I should rather have been willing to have guarded with my life and watered

with my blood. O the baseness and madness of my conduct! that I should thus, as it were, rend open the wounds of my soul, of which I had died long ere this, had not thine own hand applied a remedy, had not thine only Son bled to prepare it!—that I should violate the covenant that I have "made with thee by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5), by the memorials of such a sacrifice too, even of Jesus Christ my Lord, whereby I am become "guilty of his body and blood" (1 Cor. 11:27);—that I should bring such dishonor upon religion too, by so unsuitable a walk, and perhaps open the mouths of its greatest enemies, to insult it upon my account, and prejudice some against it to their everlasting destruction!

I wonder, O Lord God, that I am here to own all this. I wonder that thou hast not long ago appeared "as a swift witness against me" (Mal. 3:5); that thou hast not discharged the thunderbolts of thy flaming wrath against me, and crusht me into hell; making me there a terror to all about me as well as to myself, by a vengeance and ruin to be distinguished even there, where all are miserable and all hopeless.

O God, thy patience is marvelous, but how much more marvelous is thy grace, which after all this invites me to thee! While I am here giving judgment against myself that I de-

serve to die, to die for ever, thou art sending me the words of everlasting life, and "calling me as a backsliding child to return unto thee" (Jer. 3:22). Behold, therefore, O Lord, invited by thy word, and encouraged by thy grace, I come; and, great as my transgressions are, I humbly beseech thee freely to pardon them; because I know that tho my "sins have reached unto heaven" (Rev. 18:5), and "are lifted up even to the skies" (Jer. 51:9), "thy mercy, O Lord, is above the heavens" (Ps. 108:4). Extend thy mercy to me, O heavenly Father; and display, in this illustrious instance, the riches of thy grace and the prevalency of thy Son's blood. For surely, if such crimson sins as mine may be made "white as snow, and as wool" (Isa. 1:18), and if such a revolter as I am be brought to eternal glory, earth must so far as it is known be filled with wonder, and heaven with praise; and the greatest sinner may cheerfully apply for pardon, if I the chief of sinners find it. And O, that when I have lain mourning, and as it were bleeding at thy feet, as long as thou thinkest proper, thou wouldst at length heal this soul of mine which hath sinned against thee (Ps. 41:4), and "give me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:

3). O that thou wouldst at length "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and make me to hear songs of gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may yet rejoice" (Ps. 51:8, 12). Then, when a sense of thy forgiving love is shed abroad upon my heart and it is cheered with the voice of pardon, I will proclaim thy grace to others; "I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:13); those that have been backsliding from thee shall be encouraged to seek thee by my happy experience, which I shall gladly proclaim for thy glory, tho it be to my own shame and confusion of face. And may this "joy of the Lord be my strength" (Neh. 8:10), so that in it I may serve thee henceforth with vigor and zeal far beyond what I have hitherto known!

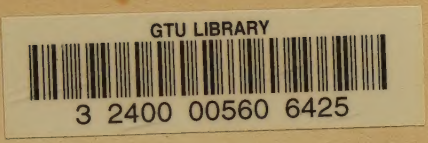
This I would ask, with all humble submission to thy will; for I presume not to insist upon it. If thou shouldst see fit to make me a warning to others by appointing that I should walk all my days in darkness, and at last die under a cloud, "thy will be done." But, O God, extend mercy for thy Son's sake to this sinful soul at last, and give me some place, tho it were at the feet of all thine other servants in the regions of glory! O bring me at length, tho it should be through the gloomiest valley that any have ever passed, into that

blessed world where I shall depart from God no more; where I shall wound my own conscience and dishonor thy holy name no more. Then shall my tongue be loosed, how long soever it might here be bound under the confusion of guilt; and immortal praises shall be paid to that victorious blood, which has redeemed such an infamous slave of sin as I must acknowledge myself to be, and brought me from returns into bondage and repeated pollution to share the dignity and holiness of those who are kings and priests unto God (Rev. 1:6). AMEN.

A Prayer of Lady Jane Grey

O merciful God, be thou now unto me a strong tower of defense, I humbly entreat thee. Give me grace to await thy leisure, and patiently to bear what thou doest unto me; nothing doubting or mistrusting thy goodness toward me; for thou knowest what is good for me better than I do. Therefore, do with me in all things what thou wilt; only arm me, I beseech thee, with thine armor, that I may stand fast; above all things, taking to me the shield of faith; praying always that I may refer myself wholly to thy will, abiding thy

pleasure, and comforting myself in those troubles which it shall please thee to send me, seeing such troubles are profitable for me; and I am assuredly persuaded that all thou doest can not but be well; and unto thee be all honor and glory. AMEN.



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